




**BISWA RANJAN PURKAIT**

# **ADMINISTRATION OF PRIMARY EDUCATION IN WEST BENGAL**



**FIRMA KLM PRIVATE LIMITED**

Dr. Biswa Ranjan Purkait, M.A., L.L.B. B.T., M.A. (Ed.), Ph. D., Reader in the Department of Education, Kalyani University, West Bengal is well-known in the world of Indian education. He has been intimately connected with the problems of Indian education for more than two decades. As a teacher he has first hand knowledge and experience of the burning issues in the arena of elementary education. With deep historical insight and profound knowledge and scholarship Dr. Purkait has studied and analysed the cause of slow progress of primary education in Bengal during the period between the two world wars and suggested possible remedies for its improvement. Dr. Purkait possesses a brilliant academic career. His research oriented mental make-up and scholarly aptitude has greatly helped him to acquire wide reputation and success as a teacher. This work which is the result of his untiring zeal and tenacity for fundamental research will, it is hoped, be accepted as a valuable contribution in the field of Indian education.



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ADMINISTRATION OF PRIMARY EDUCATION UNDER  
MONT-FORD REFORMS AND ITS IMPACT IN  
WEST BENGAL

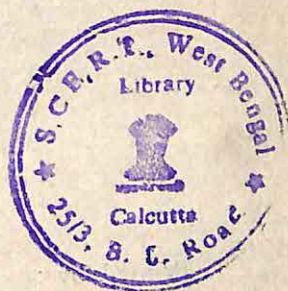


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WEST AFRICA

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ADMINISTRATION OF PRIMARY EDUCATION  
UNDER MONT-FORD REFORMS AND ITS  
IMPACT IN WEST BENGAL

BISWA RANJAN PURKAIT



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*To my daughter Basabdatta*



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Dr. Biswa Ranjan Purkait,  
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West Bengal.





## PROLOGUE :

The present inquiry envisages an analytical study of administrative and financial aspects of the expansion and improvement of elementary education in Bengal during the years under Mont-Ford Reforms and its bearing upon the same on the post-independence West Bengal. The study reveals the administrative drawbacks and financial clouds that impeded the expansion and improvement of primary education and how these lacuna stood as insurmountable hurdles in the way of introducing universal, free and compulsory primary education in the stormy days of our national struggle for freedom. The study covers the major socio-political and economic events of our national life in the early decades of the present century. A large number of national and international events clouded the horizon of our educational sky. These events directly or indirectly coloured and shaped the educational developments in this sub-continent, particularly Bengal. It has been observed in course of the study that inspite of several attempts through different legislative enactments primary education could not be made free, universal and compulsory. Mass illiteracy remained deeply rooted in this soil, the curse of which still falls on the millions of our country. The study also reveals how Government at the Centre as well as in the provinces had intentionally avoided to shoulder the financial responsibility for mass education. It always tried to shift the onus either on the local bodies or the helpless public at large.

In the thirties of this century attempts to universalise primary education became successful at least to some extent in different provinces of India particularly in Bombay, Madras and Punjab. But in Bengal, on the other hand, every attempt proved infructuous and futile. As a result, the province suffered tremendously, not only in educational advancement but also in social and economic betterment. Other provinces advanced speedily whereas Bengal lagged behind mainly due to educational backwardness caused by administrative and financial lapses.

In the present study the forces considered responsible for making primary education not free and compulsory, particularly from the points of view of administration and finance, have been critically and carefully examined. The view points of the central Government, the provincial Government, the local bodies and the general public with regard to administrative and financial aspects of elementary education have been inquired and suggestions made.

The evidence from the Government records which naturally form the bulk of the relevant and original sources, so far as primary education in Bengal is concerned, have been consulted as far as possible. The relevant and up to date secondary sources have also been consulted as and when available. The data from contemporary journals, magazines particularly native papers have been collected as far as possible, and the evidence gathered from them have been utilised very cautiously and carefully. Other reliable publications on primary education in Bengal as well as in India have also been consulted so as to gather relevant data for the pursuit of the present study in its proper perspective. The State Archives of West Bengal, the State Secretariat Library, Writers' Building, the National Library, Calcutta and the National Archives of India, New Delhi, have been consulted widely for the purpose. Unfortunately records found in the National Archives are not up to the expectation. The bibliography cited at the end of this volume will evidently corroborate the causes of success and failures mentioned in the field of primary education. One word more. The present study covers the whole of undivided Bengal but its impact has been focussed on West Bengal only, as East Bengal (Now Bangladesh) is entirely a different state.



## PREFACE :

This edition is a portion of the results of my continuous research on Administration of Primary Education in Bengal. The thesis prepared in that connection had been reduced to a certain extent to make it suitable for publication. The original title of my research work was "An Enquiry into the Administration of Primary Education in Bengal under Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms and its bearing upon the same in the Post-Independence West Bengal." The present title is an abridged form of the original one, but the content of the thesis has been kept in tact. This has been done to make it convenient for publication.

This book is essentially a historical study. It analyses and throws light on the developments of primary education in Bengal with particular reference to administration and finance. It specifically refers to the historical incidents which stood as insurmountable obstacles in the way of making primary education free, universal and compulsory which was a cherished goal in our educational arena for a long time. My object has been to give an accurate account of the state of primary education in Bengal in the beginning of this century and to throw light on the developments on this subject during the later period even after independence, indicating the most hostile attitude and policies followed by the imperialist Govt. Critical analysis has also been made with regard to the attitude and opinion of the national leaders expressed and published in different contemporary native journals and periodicals. Adequate light has been thrown from different original sources to give an accurate idea of the nature of developments relating to this important subject during a critical and eventful phase of our national history. Sincere attempt has also been made to show the impact of these developments in later days with particular reference to post-independence West Bengal. In this context the latest data have been used as far as practicable.

A few words with regard to the arrangements followed in this book. The original sources used have been referred in the foot notes and also in the Bibliography given at the end of this book. I have tried to cover all the available sources but, I think, this is not exhaustive. A few tables and appendices have been included at the end of the book. Some of these have been omitted to make it convenient for publication. An index has also been provided at the end of this volume.

As regards medium I have persistently followed English. This has been done in the hope that publication of this volume in English might facilitate its acceptance by educationists outside Bengal. My labour will be rewarded if this acceptance is received in right earnest.

*Author.*



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### PROLOGUE AND PREFACE

#### CHAPTER I

|              |     |     |     |     |   |
|--------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|---|
| Introduction | ... | ... | ... | ... | 1 |
|--------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|---|

#### CHAPTER II

|   |     |     |     |    |
|---|-----|-----|-----|----|
| The Prelude : Road to Free and Compulsory Primary Education in Bengal | ... | ... | ... | 12 |
|---|-----|-----|-----|----|

#### CHAPTER III

|  |     |     |    |
|--|-----|-----|----|
| The Primary Education Act of 1919—First Step Towards Free and Compulsory Education | ... | ... | 45 |
|--|-----|-----|----|

#### CHAPTER IV

|   |     |     |    |
|---|-----|-----|----|
| Administration and Financing of Primary Education in the City of Calcutta | ... | ... | 64 |
|---|-----|-----|----|

#### CHAPTER V

|   |     |    |
|---|-----|----|
| Administrative and Financial Lags under the Mont-Ford Reforms : Their Impact on Education | ... | 83 |
|---|-----|----|

#### CHAPTER VI

|   |     |     |
|---|-----|-----|
| Biss' Scheme—A Search for Administrative Agency and Provision for Financial Resources | ... | 119 |
|---|-----|-----|

#### CHAPTER VII

|  |     |     |     |
|--|-----|-----|-----|
| The Hartog Committee Report (1929)—First Official Review of the Condition and Growth of Elementary Education | ... | ... | 147 |
|--|-----|-----|-----|

#### CHAPTER VIII

|  |     |     |     |
|--|-----|-----|-----|
| The Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Act of 1930—A Comprehensive Plan of Universal Primary Education in Rural Bengal | ... | ... | 163 |
|--|-----|-----|-----|

#### CHAPTER IX

|  |     |     |
|--|-----|-----|
| Scheme of Mr. Azizul Haque—A Scheme for Consolidation of Primary Education in Bengal | ... | 188 |
|--|-----|-----|

# CHAPTER X

|  |     |     |     |     |     |
|--|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Importance of the Study—Findings, Recommendations<br>and Conclusions | ... | ... | ... | ... | 212 |
| APPENDICES :   | ... | ... | ... | ... | 240 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY :   | ... | ... | ... | ... | 256 |
| INDEX :  | ... | ... | ... | ... | 263 |



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

*Encyclopaedia Britannica* defines primary education and primary schools as the following:

"The first major stage of the formal education system is called primary education in some countries and elementary education in others. Historically these terms have had quite different meanings. Currently the choice between the phrases elementary education and primary education is largely a matter of national preference. The earlier distinction has largely disappeared, since most nations now have a single system for the first stage of schooling. In the U.S.A., for example, the term elementary school is widely used, whereas the term primary school is more common in Western Europe."<sup>1</sup>

"Primary school is synonymous with the term elementary school in many countries; it is the preferred term in such countries as Great Britain and France. In U.S.A. it denotes only first year of elementary education—specifically, kindergarten and grades 1 through 3".<sup>2</sup>

*Dictionary of Education* defines primary education as "(1) the period of formal education beginning in childhood, usually at the stage of 5 to 7 years, and ending approximately with adolescence; defined as including grades 1 to 8; and sometimes nursery school and kindergarten, or as ending with grade 6, as in places in which the six-six and six-three plans are in common use; (2) the division of any educational programmes that is concerned primarily with general education, including those skills, facts, and attitudes which are required by society of all its members; opposed to secondary and higher education as being less specialized in content and less selective as to pupils or students."<sup>3</sup>

1. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*—Vol. VI, p. 694.

2. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*—Vol. VIII.

3. *Dictionary of Education* Edited by Carter V. Good.

“Primary Education may conveniently be defined as that which provides literacy in the vernacular with a rudimentary knowledge of the 3 R's for a period of school life not exceeding six years and usually confined to four”.<sup>4</sup>

“Primary education is that system of instruction or preparation which satisfies the primary needs of human society—four in number, viz. feeding, clothing, housing, and social life”.<sup>5</sup>

The Education Commission of 1964-66 visualizes a flexible educational structure covering a primary stage of seven or eight years divided into two sub-stages—lower primary stage of four or five years and a higher primary stage of three years.<sup>6</sup>

#### **Role of Primary Education in a Developing Country :**

“Primary education is the nation's nursery, and so primary education which is the prime-mover for development of human resources should receive the priority it deserves”.<sup>7</sup> In any national scheme of development, primary education should be given the highest priority and importance. It is the foundation stone on which the national edifice is to be built up. For the success of any developmental programme—economic, social or political—elementary education is the first essential prerequisite. For rapid economic growth and transformation, to minimise social distance and augment social efficiency, and proper or efficient functioning of democratic set up primary education should be regarded as a stepping stone. In the present stage of world's progress, widespread primary education has come to be regarded as an essential condition for a nation's efficient existence. In the judicious exercise of franchise, in an intelligent struggle for economic advancement and in the multiform pursuits for intellectual and aesthetic enjoyment, primary education among the

4. Note of T. O. D. Dunn on the Primary Education in Bengal, 1918.

5. The Modern Review—1934, Vol. 58, p. 56.

6. Kothari Commission—p. 29.

7. Evaluation Report on Primary Education in West Bengal—1969.



masses of the people is supposed to have a chastening and uplifting influence.<sup>8</sup>

“For common human justice and for self-interest universal literacy is unavoidable. Ignorance is sin and darkness. Knowledge is virtue and light. Primary education is the foundation of knowledge. One of the first conditions of self-defence, self-reliance, self-help and self-government is the gradual emancipation of the masses from gross ignorance.”

India is a poor country. From its infancy she is trying to attain her maturity. This is possible only through rapid agro-industrial development, increase of national wealth and thereby augmentation of per capita national income. But this needs educated and efficient workers in fields and factories and proper utilization of the vast national resources.

Indian society is said to be traditionally backward with old ideas, notions, prejudices and conventions. For creating a new and progressive social order the first essential thing is change of outlook. Hence new orientation of ideas is absolutely needed. Modernisation in all walks of life is the crying need. But if the timid millions suffer from lack of fundamental education, the way of modernisation of the society in its various directions is bound to be hampered. Apart from this, variations in Indian society are accepted facts. But due to sheer ignorance this variety leads very often to social disharmony, chaos and confusion. Without elementary education the illiterate masses will simply be helpless prey in the hands of disruptive and disintegrating forces. This is highly undesirable in a democratic and developing country like India. No nation can develop and prosper without national solidarity and integrity. Universal elementary education can help immensely in achieving social cohesion and national unity inasmuch as ignorance stands as a great obstacle in the way of mutual understanding. So, from the point of view of national unity, expansion and development of elementary education among the masses is also a crying need.

8. The Modern Review, 1927. Vol. 41, p. 353.

9. National Education—Lala Lajpat Roy.



We have accepted a democratic form of political set up. In order to strengthen our cherished democratic values diffusion of mass education is essential and urgent. No democracy can work well without intelligent and efficient participation of its educated members. Democracy very often, as John Stuart Mill observes,<sup>10</sup> leads to mobocracy if democratic government is run by ignorant masses. Democracy in India is in its trial and infant stage. One major pre-condition of its successful and proper functioning is participation of its members trained and educated in democratic values and ways of life. Democratic values and ways of thinking are not expected in the ignorant masses devoid of any education. We can not expect personal enrichment and social efficiency without fundamental education. The uneducated is not in reality a free citizen. "The function of elementary education in a democracy is to provide every citizen with an opportunity for education of the type which he wishes and which he should have for his personal enrichment, professional advancement and effective participation in social and political life".<sup>11</sup>

India is still the second populous country in the world. She cannot secure an honourable place in the community of nations unless her crores and crores of people are given suitable elementary education. India is the country where the percentage of illiteracy is the highest in the world. Out of the total 65 crores of people, 67% are illiterate, without any opportunity of education.<sup>12</sup> No developmental programme can be successful with such a huge mass of uneducated people. So universal mass education is a national concern. Illiteracy as a mass phenomenon blocks economic and social progress, affects economic productivity, population control, national integration and security and improvement in health and sanitation.

"No nation can leave its security only to the police and the army; to a large extent national security depends upon

10. Grammar of Politics—J. S. Mill.

11. Kothari Commission—Chapter XVII.

12. Draft Sixth Five Year Plan.



the education of citizens, their knowledge of affairs, their character and sense of discipline and their ability to participate effectively in security measures.<sup>13</sup>

Different Afro-Asian countries have made striking and commendable progress recently in different directions of their national life through proper planning, strategy and implementation of mass education programmes. But unfortunately India, more particularly West Bengal has been lagging in this field. This lag was chiefly due to two factors:—

- (i) the Imperialist Government had little or no intention to spread mass education,
- (ii) large scale apathy and attitude of indifference among the Indian leaders as well as the common people towards popular education.

The first one is natural on the part of a foreign ruler, but the latter is unfortunate for a backward country like India. The principal strategy adopted so far to make the people literate has been to place an exclusive emphasis on the development of a programme of free and compulsory education for all children till they reach the age of 14 years. "There was a general demand just before and after independence that very high priority should be given to the programme of universal elementary education in the national development plans and that it should be reached through a phased and short-range programme."<sup>14</sup> It was in response to this demand that the Constitution of India adopted in 1950, contained the following directive :

"The State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years".<sup>15</sup> If this could have been effectively implemented by 1960, the problem would have been considerably simplified. It is, therefore, evident that, while our efforts to develop a programme of free and com-

13. Kothari Commission, Chapter—XVII.

14. The Indian Year Book of Education, p. 30, 1964.

15. Constitution of India—1950, Chapter IV, Directive Principle of State Policy.

pulsory education should continue with redoubled vigour, a time has come when a massive and direct attack on mass illiteracy is necessary. Fortunately the attention of our present Government has been attracted to this great national problem and effective measures for diffusion of mass elementary education are expected.

### Historical Perspective :

The imperialist British Government paid little attention to develop mass education in anticipation of mass consciousness and popular upsurge. Whatever they did, they did it for the spread of 'English' education because it would pay them. They wanted to create a class of English educated Indians who would help them in running the administration. Thus, British Government emphasized secondary and higher education, and mass education was left to utter neglect. The inevitable result was the complete ruin of the indigenous system of education represented by the Pathshalas and Maktabas. It would have been to the best interest of the educational development in the country if these indigenous elementary schools could have been adopted as the foundation of a national system of education and strengthened and improved through proper guidance and adequate financial aid.<sup>16</sup>

"Mr. Adam earnestly pleaded for the instruction of the people. But no general attempt was made to improve the indigenous schools. The proportion of public funds—provincial, local and municipal spent on primary education was by far the lowest in any province in India".<sup>17</sup> Consequently, the indigenous schools languished outside the official system of education till they disappeared almost completely by about 1900.

The Downward Filtration Theory was first repudiated by the Despatch of 1854. The Despatch made reference to

16. Reports of Rev. William Adams on indigenous system of education in Bengal—1835.

17. Speech of S. N. Roy in the Legislative Council—The Calcutta Gazette, 1918, Part—IV(A), p. 81.



primary education and in the next thirty years some attention was paid to it.<sup>18</sup> The same policy was reiterated in the resolution appointing the Indian Education Commission (1882) which declared that the principal object of the enquiry of the Commission should be "the present state of elementary education throughout the empire, and the means by which this can everywhere be extended and improved."<sup>19</sup>

The Commission itself recommended that "while every branch of education can justly claim the fostering care of the state, it is desirable, in the present circumstances of the country, to declare the elementary education of the masses, its provision, extension, and improvement, to be that part of the educational system to which the strenuous efforts of the state should now be directed in a still larger measure than heretofore."<sup>20</sup> Thus the Indian Education Commission gave particular emphasis to the development of elementary education. It made one radical recommendation: the responsibility, control and administration of elementary education should be transferred to local bodies—the District Boards in rural areas and the Municipalities in urban areas. The recommendation was accepted, and for the first time elementary education came to be a local responsibility. But the local bodies failed to achieve the desired goal. The problem of compulsory education was also raised before the Commission, but was ruled out as unpractical. However, it made several recommendations to accord priority to the expansion and improvement of elementary education. In spite of these recommendations, elementary education languished even between 1881 and 1901. The main cause was the neglect to provide adequate financial support. Thus inspite of local responsibility of primary education the results were not very satisfactory. A novel experiment was conducted in the native state of Baroda for the introduction of compulsory education, (during Gaikward III). In January, 1893 compulsory educa-

18. Eighth Quinquennial Report on the Progress of Education in Bengal, Chapter—I.

19. Report of the Indian Education Commission, 1882, p. 625.

20. Report of the Indian Education Commission, 1882, p. 174.

tion was introduced in the Amreli Taluka on experimental basis. The experiment proved to be successful. The Baroda Compulsory Education Act was passed in 1906 and successively modified in 1910, 1916 and 1926 in the light of experiences gained in the field. The Baroda experiment was a step forward towards free and compulsory primary education particularly under Indian initiative.

Lord Curzon, though an imperialist to the core, desired the spread of primary education through the mother-tongue. He laid emphasis on primary education. He expressed the desire to make it free and compulsory. But his desires were frustrated by the opposition of some provinces. Thus when the Imperialist Government could be expected to do a bit to diffuse elementary education, the administrators in India were themselves opposed to it either due to misunderstanding or sheer apathy and indifference to such a course of action. Curzon, however, took a bold decision in increasing provincial grants to local funds. The Government Resolution on Educational Policy clearly states the genesis of his policy in respect of primary education:

“Primary education is the instruction of the masses, through the vernacular, in such subjects as will best stimulate their intelligence and fit them for their position in life. The Government of India fully accept the proposition that the active extension of primary education is one of the most important duties of the state”. “On a general view of the question the Government of India can not avoid the conclusion that primary education has hitherto received insufficient attention and an inadequate share of the public funds. They consider that it possesses a strong claim upon the sympathy both of the Supreme Government and of the local Government, and should be made a leading charge upon provincial revenues; and that in those provinces where it is in a backward condition, its encouragement should be a primary obligation. The Government of India believe that local Governments are cordially in agreement with them in desiring this



extension, and will carry it out to the limits allowed by the financial conditions of each province.”<sup>21</sup>

Mass education received attention in the hands of the national leaders in the beginning of the 20th century. It was regarded as a tool for national liberation. A national system of education must be based on popular education through mother-tongue. National leaders like G. K. Gokhale, Lala Lajpat Roy, Mrs. Annie Besant, S. N. Banerjee, Aurobindo Ghose pleaded eloquently in favour of mass education as a pre-condition of mass consciousness. Primary education arrested the attention of the National Council of Education, Bengal. This is evident from the objects embodied in the Memorandum of Association and the Schemes of Study published by the National Council. The objects of the Association were :

“To impart and promote the imparting of Education—Literary and Scientific, as well as Technical and professional on National lines and exclusively under National Control—not in opposition to, but standing apart from, the existing systems of primary, secondary and collegiate Education attaching special importance to a knowledge of the country, its Literature, History and Philosophy, and designed to incorporate with the best oriental ideals of life and thought, the best assimilable ideals of the west and to inspire students with a genuine love for and a real desire to serve the country”. ..... “To impart and to facilitate the imparting of education ordinarily through the medium of the vernacular languages such as Bengalee, Hindu, Urdu, English being a compulsory second language”. ..... “To establish in Calcutta and elsewhere schools primary and secondary, as well as colleges and other educational institutions for the imparting of such education.”<sup>22</sup> The schemes of study framed by the National Council of Education included a three years’ course for primary stage from the 6th year and extending over 3 years. Later in 1908 it was extended to 4 years.

21. Progress of Education in India. (1897-1902) pp. 462-63.

22. Calendar of National Council of Education, Bengal, 1906-8, p. 2.



The question of free compulsory primary education was taken up by Sri Gopal Krishna Gokhale, the great Indian leader and educationist, in the Imperial Legislative Council. He introduced a Bill in this regard in 1910 and again in 1911 in the Council. The Bill had four special features. It was permissive in character. Another distinctive feature of the Bill was to leave the initiative for introducing compulsory education to local authorities. Thirdly the scope of the Bill was very modest. The Bill visualised a compulsory course of four years only and the age-period of compulsion was fixed at six to ten years. Compulsion was to be introduced for boys only in the first instance and later on extended to girls. Similarly, compulsion was to be introduced first in towns and then extended to villages. Another important feature of the Bill was that it did not directly place any financial obligation on Government and merely that a local body desiring to introduce compulsory education shall bear the increased expenditure. But Gokhale was emphatic that substantial additional financial support must come from Government if any worthwhile results were to be achieved. He said in the Council : "No large extension of elementary education is possible in the country unless the Government of India come forward with generous financial assistance."<sup>23</sup> In spite of the very modest character of the Bill it was defeated in the Imperial Legislative Council in the face of strong official opposition. Mr. Gokhale met all the Government opposition very calmly and made the following memorable remarks in his concluding address :

"My Lord, I know that my bill will be thrown out before the day closes. I make no complaint. I shall not even feel depressed.....I have always felt and have often said that, we of the present generation in India, can only hope to serve our country by our failures. The men and women who will be privileged to serve by their successes will come later..... This bill, thrown out today, will come back again and again, till on the stepping stones of its dead selves, a measure ulti-

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23. D. M. Desai—Compulsory Primary Education in India, p. 90.

mately rises which will spread the light of knowledge throughout the land.”<sup>24</sup>

Though Mr. Gokhale's attempts failed yet primary education in India received a great impetus in 1912. The Government of India promised larger extension of primary education, gradually making it free, and promised enhanced grants from the Treasury. It also urged local Governments to pay more attention to the educational needs of the provinces. Paragraph II of the Resolution of the Government of India on Educational Policy (1913) reiterated its decision to improve and extend primary education.

The cause of primary education gained a new momentum in the hands of Shri Vithalbhai Patel in Bombay. He moved in 1917 a bill in the Bombay Legislative Council for the introduction of compulsory elementary education in Bombay Municipal Districts. It was broadly based on the provisions of Ghokale's Bill. Although there was some opposition even now, the Bill was ultimately passed with some modifications and became the first law on compulsory education in India.<sup>25</sup> The Act of 1918 popularly known as the Patel Act was the first provincial attempt for compulsory education, and this led to the passing of a series of provincial Acts on compulsory education. Primary education advanced speedily in provinces such as Madras, Punjab, United Provinces, Assam, Central Provinces and Bengal. A new era ushered in the Presidency of Bengal with the passing of the Primary Education Act of 1919. Here again a private individual Mr. S. N. Ray, an educationist and philanthropist paved the way for a new era of mass illumination. A serious attempt was made to devise measures for the rapid breaking down of illiteracy.<sup>26</sup> The Primary Education Act of 1919 heralded the dawn of the type of education that is a near approach to our present day primary education.<sup>27</sup>

24. Gokhale's Speeches—1920 Edition.

25. D. M. Desai—Compulsory Primary Education in India, pp. 104-11.

26. Elementary Education in India—J. M. Sen. Chapter—VI.

27. Evaluation Report on Primary Education in West Bengal, January, 1969.



## CHAPTER II

### THE PRELUDE : ROAD TO FREE AND COMPULSORY PRIMARY EDUCATION IN BENGAL

In August, 1917 the Secretary of State for India on behalf of His Majesty's Government made an announcement in the House of Commons regarding the change to be introduced in the administrative policy of India. She was gradually to become a self-governing country. It is now unquestionably a recognised fact all over the world that one of the first conditions of self-defence, self-reliance, self-help and self-government is the gradual emancipation of the masses from gross ignorance. Acceptance of the principles of local self-government and popular election, pre-suppose that the mass of the population will by degrees attain at least that elementary knowledge which enables them to exercise judiciously their rights and powers. Hence the official and non-official members of the Legislative Councils of all the provinces in India began to pay serious attention to devise measures for the rapid expansion of mass education.<sup>1</sup>

The first serious attempt in this regard at least in Bengal Presidency was the Bengal Primary Education Act of 1919 which was drafted on the lines of the report of Mr. M. P. West, 1918. Mr. West, officer on special duty, as directed by the Government of Bengal made a survey of primary education. His purpose was to ascertain the extent and adequacy of present provision of primary education for school-going boys.<sup>2</sup> The Survey dealt with both administration and finance of primary education in Bengal. The report gives the estimate for free and compulsory education throughout Bengal excluding Calcutta, Darjeeling and Chittagong Hill areas. Mr. West made extensive enquiries almost in every district aiming at securing not only information relating to

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1. J. M. Sen—Elementary Education in India—Chapter—VI.

2. Terms of reference—General Deptt. No. 1329 of 20th Nov. 1917.



primary education but also at arriving at general opinion regarding its value and regarding developments and improvements that were necessary or desirable. The report embodies the results of his enquiries and not the raw materials collected. The Survey dealt with the following questions :—

- (a) how far the existing resources in Municipalities meet the real educational needs of the people ;
- (b) how many children are without education ;
- (c) what funds are available ;
- (d) how these funds can be increased ;
- (e) into what sections the population is divided in District Board areas ;
- (f) the average distance between schools in these areas ;
- (g) what special factors affect the accessibility of schools ;
- (h) how many villages are without schools ; and
- (i) financial position of these areas in relation to primary education.

The report deals largely with the defects of the existing system which was far from satisfactory due to various reasons :—

- (a) resources in money and labour, are inadequate ;
- (b) people are apathetic to primary education ;
- (c) low remuneration paid to teachers ;
- (d) incompetent and half-hearted efforts for primary education ;
- (e) villages and local leaders are enthusiastic for the institution of schools but not anxious about the quality of teaching ;
- (f) the sub-Inspector's work is often unhelpful and uninspiring and his emoluments and status are far from satisfactory ;
- (g) the system of grant-in-aid fails to secure control and efficiency, there is a great wastage of resources.<sup>3</sup>

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3. File 1E-7 Progs. Nos. 191-95, 1919.

The report deals, in section 9, specifically with free and compulsory education.<sup>4</sup> Mr. West collected opinions of one hundred and two persons to consider the question of compulsion. Of these 80 were in favour of Compulsion at an early date ; 22 were opposed. The chief reasons for opposition are : (1) The municipality can not supply the necessary schools ; (2) the district can not afford to pay a tax and is too backward generally ; (3) compulsion will involve extra taxation, it had better be postponed ; (4) it would upset the social system to compel the lower castes to be educated ; (5) caste prejudices and divisions are too numerous ; (6) it would divert the attention of the children of the agricultural classes from agriculture ; (7) cultivators cannot afford labour to replace the labour of their children and many children have to earn their own living ; (8) boys can not be compelled to go to bad schools, and the aided schools are bad ; (9) the teacher can not be relied upon if there are fines for non-attendance ; (10) more literacy is useless.

82 cases were taken to consider free education. 72 opinions were in favour of free education, nine were against. The reasons against free education are :—

- (1) that the fees are now so small that they make little difference ;
- (2) the extra cost would be too great ;
- (3) people will appreciate better what they have to pay for ;

The general opinion was in favour of free education in some form.

In regard to the cost, eighty four opinions were taken ; of these sixtyone were in favour of some form of taxation ; twenty-three against. Thus it can be said that there was a general feeling in favour of compulsion, of free education, of taxation for the purpose.

For the purpose of compulsion three alternatives were suggested :—

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4. Report on the survey of Primary education, Bengal, 1918, M. P. West, Section 9 (pages 78-82).



- (a) a general act of the Baroda type ;<sup>5</sup>
- (b) a permissive act of the Gokhale-Patel-Roy type ;
- (c) Measures (not legislative) which might prepare for the introduction of compulsion at a future date but no immediate legislation for the purpose.

The consensus of opinion appears to have favoured a permissive act on two reasons. (1) *First*, most of the Municipalities were not in a position to introduce compulsion in near future. They were reluctant to impose taxation immediately. They might introduce it in future and through gradual stages. (2) *Secondly*, the conditions of the majority of schools in Bengal were not suitable from administrative and financial points of view for immediate introduction of compulsion. Before compulsion could be considered, there must be at least the nucleus of a satisfactory system. The Bill of Mr. S. N. Roy was permissive in nature. It provided for voluntary as well as compulsory provisions. The majority of the members in the Council favoured such a middle course though the voluntary aspect of the Bill was subject to criticism. The subject will be discussed in detail at an appropriate place. This much can be said here by way of comment that the survey made by Mr. West paved the way for future course of action as revealed in the Bengal Primary Education Act, 1919. At first it was suggested that there should be compulsory provision of schools. The proposal was, therefore, that a Bill should be drafted :—

- (1) giving powers to Municipalities, District Boards and selected Union Committees to impose a tax or cess and to borrow money for educational purposes ;
- (2) making it incumbent upon all Municipalities to provide within a term of years to be settled by consultation with the Education Department a complete system of schools owned and managed by the Municipi-

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5. The Baroda Compulsory Education Act was first passed in 1906 and successively modified in 1910, 1916 and 1926 in the light of experiences gained in the field. In January, 1893 compulsory education had been introduced in the Amreli Taluka on experimental basis.

- pality with one teacher per class of not more than 30 boys, one class being one standard, in all places containing 120 or more boys of school-going age within a radius of  $2/3$  miles.
- (3) giving the local Government power to call upon any District Board to provide within a term of years a complete system of public schools owned and managed by the District Board or by the Union Committee under the guidance of the District Board;
  - (4) giving the Municipality and District Board power to close or remove any aided or unaided primary schools which compete with or take boys from a school under public management ;
  - (5) giving the provincial Government powers to levy an education tax direct or indirect and making it incumbent upon Government to contribute at least one-third of the capital cost and one-quarter of the recurring cost of the proposed Primary School system ;
  - (6) giving the District Boards powers to call upon any village or group of villages in an area to start a school on a site to be settled in consultation with the Education Department so as to serve the largest possible area.

Government would, therefore, be given powers of compulsion which it might exercise upon local authorities. It is necessary to specify the nature of compulsion. In England, the local Government Board has power to suspend and take over temporarily the administration of any particular department of a local authority in which there is gross maladministration. The desirability of such a power in Bengal is obvious.<sup>6</sup> It is amazing to note here that Mr. Roy's Bill does not help at all in the case of idle or parsimonious local authority which may evade its educational responsibility. It is possible that powers are needed to compel a local authority to organise compulsion.

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6. Report on the working of Municipalities in Bengal, 1916-17, Section 13, p. 4.



So far we have said enough in connection with section 9 of the Report of Mr. M. P. West which exclusively deals with free and compulsory Primary education. Let us now pay our attention to other important observations made by Mr. West which will throw a flood of light on the condition of educational administration and finance just on the eve of the introduction of the Bengal Primary Education Bill in the Legislative Council by Mr. S. N. Roy in 1917.

Mr. M. P. West made his survey of primary education with reference to the proposed introduction of free and compulsory education and in connection with the declared policy of the Government of India to double the existing primary schools.<sup>7</sup>

The report indicated the extent and adequacy of the present provision for primary education for the present population of school-going age.—School-going age is taken at five. But for all practical purposes six seems to be the best age for acceptance as the beginning of school-life. Four year course starts at six and ends at ten.

Primary education is not losing ground with the increase of population but it is making little head-way against such increase. The average number of primary schools per square mile is .4 (including rivers and lakes). The ideal size for a primary school is 120 boys (four classes each of 30 boys).<sup>8</sup>

This size is most conducive to efficiency. Actual number of schools is 31,917. This number of schools is sufficient to provide facilities for all villages containing more than 500 inhabitants, if these schools were of reasonable size and properly distributed. As a matter of fact many villages of 500 to 1,000 inhabitants have no school. The schools are not systematically or economically distributed. The following table shows the distribution of schools per square mile in the District Board areas :—

7. The Govt. of India's letter No. 750 dated the 2nd Sept. 1917 addressed to the Secy., Department of Education, Govt. of Bengal.

8. Report on the Survey of Primary Education in Bengal—Abridged publication of the Govt. of Bengal—1918.

Table—I ( Table—IIIA of the Report )

| District  | Schools per square mile |     |
|-----------|-------------------------|-----|
| Howrah    | ...                     | 1.2 |
| Midnapore | ...                     | .7  |
| Birbhum   | ...                     | .6  |
| Burdwan   | ...                     | .5  |
| Bogra     | ...                     | .49 |
| Rangpur   | ...                     | .4  |
| Bankura   | ...                     | .38 |
| Rajshahi  | ...                     | .33 |
| Malda     | ...                     | .24 |

This also applies to Municipalities Table II Shows it.

Table—II ( Table—II of the Report )

Schools per square mile in Municipalities

| Name of the Municipality | Number of boys' Primary Schools per square mile |      |
|--------------------------|---|------|
| Bankura                  | ...   | 12.5 |
| Howrah                   | ...   | 12.0 |
| Bogra                    | ...   | 10.8 |
| Serampore                | ...   | 6.8  |
| Malda                    | ...   | 5.6  |
| Midnapur                 | ...   | 5.5  |
| Bally                    | ...   | 4.5  |
| Rampur                   | ...   | 3.3  |
| Burdwan                  | ...   | 2.1  |
| Natore                   | ...   | 2.8  |
| Suri                     | ...   | 2.0  |
| Asansol                  | ...   | 1.5  |
| Rangpur                  | ...   | .7   |

In Municipalities one school per square mile would appear to be the most economical and efficient provision. The lack of centralisation of educational effort is illustrated in Table V of the Report which shows the average distance walked to school by children. Table IV of the Report summarises the result of an enquiry as to the causes of there being no school in 37 unschooled areas where schools might have been expected. The chief cause seems to be inability of small villages to co-operate with their neighbours in educational effort.



Probably the most useful index of the adequacy of the present provision is that of floor space. The total accommodation in Primary schools of all qualities and primary sections of Middle schools and High schools (excluding Calcutta, Darjeeling and Chittagong Hill Tracts) would admit 1,555,013 boys at 6 square feet per boy.

There were 40,169 teachers in primary schools. The number of boys per primary teacher (whole province) is 29.

The output of the Normal and Guru-training schools were men of almost Middle School standard. 41% were Middle School teachers. In 1917 total number of Matriculates were 8,349. Buildings and equipments of majority schools were of poor quality. Only 33% of schools were publicly owned buildings.

Quality of teaching was deplorable. The majority of the children left idle were in the lower classes. There were less teachers than classes. Apart from that, teachers were busy with the higher classes for good scholarship results. There was no incentive to good teaching in lower classes. Wastage was highest in class I in primary schools. It was 45% of the total enrolment.

The material conditions of the schools were far from satisfactory. Most of the schools were ill-housed and ill-equipped. Of 117 aided and unaided schools studied, 25% had no maps; 23% no text books, 8% no furniture at all, 8% had no black boards.

Most of the schools had one teacher only. A teacher had to teach four classes,  $1\frac{1}{3}$  teachers per school. This was the chief reason for the inefficiency of the work. The salary of a teacher was deplorably low for decent living. It was not more than Rs. 5/- per mensem. Teaching was only an addition to other sources of income of a teacher. It was not the sole or chief means of support.

There was unsatisfactory departmental control. Visits by Inspectors were infrequent. There was no standard form of inspection. The average income per member of a family which sent their children was Rs. 3.7 per mensem.

Families in Municipal Area—Rs. 3.1 per member per mensem.

Families in District Board area—Rs. 2.8 per member per mensem.

We have observed in brief the major areas of survey conducted by Mr. M. P. West. A few words should be uttered with regard to its efficacy and applicability. Mr. West's report is disappointing. It is full of details. No general conclusion can be drawn from the data. It is difficult to see the wood for the trees. Statements of cost given in the Table No. XIIIC of the Report are, however, useful.<sup>9</sup> Mr. West provided two schemes both of which were estimated. He also gave Explanations of the Estimate.

Mr. West's report excluded Calcutta. Mr. Dunn's report on the survey of primary education in Calcutta is informative and supplementary to Mr. West's report. With the two reports there should be complete information for the whole Presidency.

Mr. West proposed the introduction of free and compulsory education for the age-group 5-10. He estimated the expected cost for the purpose districtwise. (This was, however, not in line of terms of reference). The principal recommendations of Mr. West may be summarised below :—

- (1) the aided system be abandoned as a policy ;
- (2) local authorities be encouraged to organise a complete system of schools owned and managed by them ;
- (3) the local authorities be empowered to close private schools which interfere with the system of public schools ;
- (4) the teachers be made servants of the local authority on a rate of pay which will make teaching their chief or only source of income. The minimum salary for an assistant teacher should be Rs. 15/- per mensem and Rs. 25/- for a Headmaster ;
- (5) Sub-Inspectors of schools be trained specifically for their work, and that officers of higher grade be ap-



pointed as District Inspectors in place of the present Deputy Inspectors ;

- (6) leaders of public should endeavour to educate public opinion that the public will be prepared to make the necessary sacrifices for a satisfactory system of primary education.

Mr. West's report suggests inter alia that expansion is not, in many localities at least, so important as improvement by reduction of number of schools and their concentration with a view to efficiency and avoiding overlapping of schools.

Mr. West's figures were based on the census of 1911. It would, of course, be more satisfactory if any programme for the expansion of primary education drawn up could be based on the figures of the new census of 1921.

Mr. E. E. Biss was entrusted with this work.

Mr. West gives two schemes framed according to financial burden. The Second scheme involves smaller figure, estimates the cost of free and compulsory education at Rs. 1,52,43,233/- capital and Rs. 1,43,23,277/- recurring.

**Note of Mr. T. O. D. Dunn on Doubling Policy of the Govt. of India.**

After the publication of Mr. West's Report on the "survey of primary education in Bengal, 1918", the next important educational development from the points of view of administrative and financial considerations in Bengal was the Note of Mr. T. O. D. Dunn, officiating D. P. I., Bengal, in relation to the letter No. 750 of 2nd September, 1918. Mr. Dunn submitted his Note on 12th September, 1919. By this time the Bengal Primary Education Act of 1919 was passed on the 27th March 1919. When this act was under consideration by the Council, the Government of Bengal was also seriously pondering over the abovenoted letter of the Govt. of India.<sup>10</sup> The letter was addressed to the Secretary to Government of Bengal, General (Edn.) Deptt. by the officiating Secretary to Government of India. The letter is significant and far-reaching because it indicated the administra-

10. File No. 1E20, May, 1920, Progs. No. 2-5.





tive and financial policy of the Govt. of India with regard to extension of elementary education in Bengal Presidency.

The intention of the Imperialist Govt. is quite obvious. It tested the national confrontation in the wake of the Boycott movement in 1905. The Indian nationalist opinion co-operated and joined hands with the British Govt. during the war in expectation of more political concessions after the war. But the net tangible result was far from satisfactory and not up to the national expectation. Thus a second confrontation was imminent. The Imperial Govt. felt the pulse of the nationalist sentiment. They wanted to avoid it and the natural policy was the pacification of nationalist opinion. The gesture of spreading elementary education was regarded as the only media through which they could reach the Indian masses. This was the background in which the above letter of the Imperial Government was mooted out.

Rapid progress had been made in the field of elementary education in between 1912-1917. But the intervention of the war checked the full realisation of the programme. The country as a whole was prepared for a solid advance towards mass education. The Government of India wanted that there should be uniform speeding up of the general spread of elementary schools and that this should be effected by a general compulsion on all local bodies throughout the country to provide facilities for the extension of primary education so as to carry out the plan put forward in 1917 of doubling the number of existing primary schools and thereby to spread elementary education among the male population in India. The letter stated that in 1917 the Government of India evolved a scheme which provided :

1. that effort should be made to double the present number of pupils in boys primary schools in ten years ;
2. that of the additional expenditure involved  $\frac{1}{3}$ rd should be met by the Imperial Govt. ;  $\frac{1}{3}$ rd by the provincial Govt., and  $\frac{1}{3}$ rd by local bodies ;
3. and that local bodies should be under the obligation to establish and maintain the facilities requisite for carrying out the above scheme, and should, when



necessary, be empowered to raise further taxation for the purpose.

Since the above scheme was formulated, the position of affairs, as the Govt. of India letter remarks, had considerably changed due to constitutional reforms particularly the proposed grant of larger powers to local bodies and the bestowal of a large measure of autonomy on provincial Govt. together with the more complete separation of Imperial and Provincial finance. It became impossible to proceed with the original scheme. Far-reaching measures of devolution were proposed in financial and other matters in the Indian Constitutional Reforms.<sup>11</sup> The local Govt., therefore, would have to take keen interest for the development of elementary education. The proposed expansion of franchise would also act as an incentive to the proposed extension of primary education. The proposed extension of primary education would be carried out by provincial Govt. and local bodies and such extension would be one of the serious and responsible duties of these bodies. "The responsibility of carrying out the proposed extension of primary education will rest with the reformed Provincial Administration and local bodies, and the introduction of a system of educational development will constitute one of the first of the serious and responsible duties which will fall to the lot of these bodies. It is, therefore, of importance to have definitely in view a programme of action which can be introduced at the earliest possible moment.<sup>12</sup> Provincial Govts. under the reforms were free to carry out any scheme of educational development. Provincial Govts. could no longer expect grants from the Govt. of India. They now had resources to expand education more rapidly. It was hardly necessary for the Govt. of India to lay stress on the paramount importance of educational development and the need for a well considered scheme of advance. (Schemes of educational expansion among the masses might be adopted throughout India). Thus the letter

11. Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms—Devolution Rules.

12. The letter No. 750 of 2nd Sept., 1918—File No. 1E20, May, —Progs. 2-5.

communicates the essential features of an Imperial programme conceived in 1917 and the subsequent constitutional changes with all its possible implications. But the adoption of this programme would result in no financial aid from Imperial revenues. It suggests that the doubling policy, and the enforcement of this on local bodies empowered to raise taxation, should be visualized in its relationship with the new conditions of local autonomy.

Mr. Dunn suggested in his Note in reference to the above letter that action upon the suggestions of the Govt. of India might be taken in the two following ways :—

1. the doubling policy apart from Imperial assistance might be worked out in relation to existing facts.
2. this policy with its whole financial responsibilities had to be laid upon the shoulders of local bodies.

The Note is very much important as it made some significant observations on the feasibility of the doubling policy, part to be played by the provincial Govt. in respect of the doubling policy, part to be played by the provincial Govt. in respect of the extension of elementary education, the role of the local bodies (Municipalities, District Boards and Union Committees) in relation to that extension. Mr. Dunn also outlined some financial measures to be taken by way of implementing the provisions of the Bengal Primary Education Act, 1919.

The Government of India had two objects in view :—

1. they wanted a report as to how far their own scheme of 1917 would be feasible when the Reform Scheme was introduced ;
2. they wanted to stimulate the local Govt. to adopt definite scheme for the expansion of primary education ;

As regards the first the D. P. I., (Mr. Dunn) estimated the cost (capital and recurring) of doubling the existing number of schools within 10 years. The D. P. I. conveniently utilised the figures of the cost involved with the help of Mr. West's report. The next point to consider was whether it would be practicable to introduce the scheme. The Govt. of



India contemplated that one-third of the cost would be met by local bodies. (Presumably Municipalities to meet  $1/3$ rd of the cost of doubling the existing number of schools in Municipal areas and District Boards in District Board areas).

Local bodies were also to be obliged to "establish and maintain the facilities requisite for carrying out the scheme." Local bodies would have to be compelled to contribute  $1/3$ rd of the cost but this was not possible without legislation. It was proposed that constitutions should be changed and both types of Local-Self-Govt. and education should be transferred to a minister responsible to a popular Government.

Again provincial Government should have to bear two-thirds of the burden. Mr. West provided two schemes framed according to financial burden. The second scheme which involved smaller figure, estimated the cost of free compulsory education at Rs. 1,52,43,233/- capital and Rs. 1,43,23,277/- recurring.<sup>13</sup>

Under the new conditions the Govt. of India would contribute nothing. Then the whole cost would be borne by the Provincial Govt. and the local bodies.

"In Bengal there are 34,000 boys' primary schools of different types. There are 1,200,000 boys reading in these schools. Of these, more than three-fourths receive some trifling Grant-in-aid. Of the remaining schools, about 3,000 have been built by public funds and are managed by District Boards ; while about 4,000 have no grants of any kind. The vitality of this system may be gauged by its reproductive power. There is an increase of 1.5 per cent boys per annum ; while schools increase by 3 per cent per annum. In other words, there is no direct relationship between the increase of schools and of children reading in them. ...A word may be said on expenditure all round on primary education. A sum of rupees 40,00,000/- (forty lakhs) is disbursed annually. Half of this comes from fees ; and the remaining half if roughly divided between the Imperial and the Provincial Govts. After all, the Govt. of India has had no excessive

13. Table XIIIIC of the Report of Mr. M. P. West.

share of this expenditure. All round, it costs the Local Govt. Rs. 2-8-11 per year boy in a primary school."<sup>14</sup>

A Panchayati Union school costs Rs. 1,000 to build. Taking Rs. 500/- as an average, the total cost would be Rs. 1,70,00,000 for doubling. Recurring cost would be on 10 years basis Rs. 5½ lakhs and over 1 lakh in addition annually.

"The only policy of the Govt. was to develop primary education through the medium of District Boards and Municipalities. There were large numbers of Board primary schools in Panchayati Unions in East Bengal. It was also introduced into West Bengal (Mr. Sharp's Scheme). There were thousands of primary schools also established by private agencies and assisted by grants-in-aid. Development was slow due to lack of interest. Recurring grant of Rs. 5½ lakhs was not enough for developmental work. The problem was tremendous. There had been little real interest in the spread of primary education in Bengal. District Boards and Municipalities were more interested in secondary education rather than primary education."<sup>15</sup>

Resources could come from (1) provincial revenues under the future financial settlement, (2) local rates including possibly a cess for primary education. The first source was doubtful. Many members of the Select Committee on Primary Education Bill were not in favour of imposing local cess.

In spite of Mr. West's scheme and Mr. Dunn's survey of needs in Calcutta, no new policy could be worked out unless there was considerable change in the conditions of the problem. This change must be twofold—(a) in educating general public opinion of the desirability of promoting primary education, (b) in resources :

(a) was coming about, but (b) was an unknown factor.

14. Note of T. O. D. Dunn—Para 4.

15. Letter of W. C. Wordsworth, D. P. L., Govt. of Bengal dtd. 28.12.1918.

**Notes :** Class I Model Pry. School of E. Bengal came to be known as the Panchayati Union School.



By the Elementary Education Act of 1870 in England, School Boards had been empowered to impose rates and obliged to shoulder responsibility to build and maintain schools for all children, and determine curricula, organisation etc. But we were far from this in Bengal. The only thing the Provincial Govt. did for the promotion of primary education was the grant of 5½ lakhs.<sup>16</sup> Mr. Hornell's view of the position in his quinquennial review is also interesting.

1. "Primary education is not appreciated by the people themselves except as a stepping stone to higher education: it is not in popular demand per se.
2. Expansion on any large scale is precluded by financial exigencies, neither the Provincial Govt. nor local bodies having funds to spare for the purpose.
3. No comprehensive scheme of expansion has in fact been prepared because of financial difficulties. Such expansion as there has been during the present century is due to the system of doles, i.e. recurring grants at irregular intervals by the Government of India".

"The local bodies had no funds for any scheme of expansion: the local Govt. also had none. The revenues of the local bodies were generally inelastic and unable to meet the strain of expenditure on educational expansion. Local Govt. used to finance them by special grants. But such grants were very small in comparison to other provinces".<sup>17</sup>

Thus expansion involved only one question—the question of finance. Govt. would not bear the burden alone and local bodies must help. The local bodies could not do so with their existing resources. They could do so only by raising their funds through the imposition of an education cess. Education cess was proposed in the Primary Education Bill. The Bill stipulated imposition of Education cess by the Municipalities subject to consent of two-thirds of the commissioners and sanction of the Provincial Government.

16. Ibid.

17. Mr. W. W. Hornell's Note on 31 Aug., 1917. paras 1-3.

The crucial question was whether the levy of an education cess should be optional or compulsory. If it were only optional, it would be the discretion of the local bodies to impose it or not. Some might impose, others not. In that case no real advance would be made. If it were compulsory, the Govt. would be ready to make grants of two-thirds of the total amount required for the scheme of expansion. So far as capital expenditure was concerned, Govt. would find no difficulty for money. Govt. had enormous educational balance for building and equipping schools. The real difficulty was with the recurring expenditure such as pay of teachers, extra inspecting staff, cost of maintenance of buildings etc. One reason was educational. Teachers in existing primary schools were under-paid and ill-trained. They should be properly paid and made fit to teach. In any scheme of expansion the existing teachers as well as the new recruits must properly be trained and paid. Doubling the number of schools without adequate remuneration and training to teachers would mean inefficiency of the schools. That was not desirable. But, no doubt, these would break through the ignorance of the masses as the existing schools did. The difficulties could be overcome if the amount of the proposed education cess and the Govt. grants were sufficient.

Thus the gravest difficulty was with the financial position. According to the outline scheme in paragraph 206 of the Report on the Reform Scheme, Bengal would have a net provincial surplus of only 10 lakhs.<sup>18</sup> Hence it was doubtful whether the Govt. could be able to undertake the liability of contributing two-thirds of the cost of doubling primary schools.

The main views may be summed up as follows:—

1. The desirability of doubling the number of primary schools and so reducing illiteracy might be admitted. It was, however, also necessary—(a) to provide for raising the pay of the present teachers, and (b) to

18. Montagu Chelmsford Report (Devolution Rules—Chap. VIII, Para 206 ).

Notes : Madras—63 lakhs surplus.  
Bombay—13 lakhs surplus.



arrange for the training of teachers for the new schools.

It would probably be necessary to extend the suggested term for 10 years.

2. The cost should be borne by local bodies as well as by Govt. The contribution now made by Govt. to primary education was comparatively small and should be increased, but an increase was impossible (except for capital expenditure) under present conditions. It was doubtful whether under the Reform Scheme more money would be available for primary education.
3. It was desirable that local bodies should be empowered by legislation to raise an education cess, and this should be optional unless Govt. could promise two-thirds of the cost of the scheme, in which case it might be compulsory.

Enough has been said by way of background in which Mr. Dunn submitted his Note dated 12th September 1919 in reference to the "doubling policy" of the Govt. of India. Mr. Dunn considered the issue both in respect of Municipal and rural areas.

Under the Reforms Scheme the responsibility of carrying out the proposed extension would rest with the reformed provincial administration and local bodies. It, therefore, meant that the Govt. of India would not contribute anything towards the expansion as we have mentioned it in the beginning of our discussion on the problem. Mr. Dunn opined that the doubling policy involved compulsory education of all children in rural as well as Municipal areas.<sup>19</sup>

#### **Municipalities :**

The possible line of action with regard to Municipalities is described in paragraph 8 of Mr. Dunn's Note. In 114 Municipalities, exclusive of Calcutta, there were 1,031 primary schools with 45,653 pupils. Of these, the majority received trifling grants-in-aid from the Municipalities. These bodies spent on primary education Rs. 54,613/-. There was

<sup>19</sup>. Paragraph 6 of Dunn's Note.

little, if any, sense of responsibility on the part of the Municipal authorities. No portion of an inspector's work was more depressing than that connected with Municipalities (paragraph 5 of Dunn's Note). Thus primary education in Municipalities was notoriously deficient and inefficient. Mr. Dunn suggested that a definite policy should be followed of providing large model schools (170) with cheap but substantial buildings, and with accommodation for 200 in each for one-fourth of the whole number of children of school-going age, the remainder being accommodated in hired houses. All this should be done within a period of ten years, at the end of which the recurring cost for the whole province would be Rs. 16½ lakhs, the capital cost of the scheme being Rs. 17 lakhs. (2) Mr. Dunn calculated a total of 136,000 children in 114 Municipalities ( $34,000 = \frac{1}{4}$ ), but 136,000 minus 45,000 at school, minus 34,000 in model schools, would leave more than "34,000 illiterates" to be provided for. He proposed to improve 50 per cent of the existing schools and to hire houses for schooling the residue of illiterates which he took at 34,000. (3) He also suggested that an educational committee of the Municipality should control education within the Municipality, such committees being related to the central educational authority by which he presumably meant the Department of Public Inspection. The scheme seems sound enough, if the Municipalities were ready to accept it and to contribute their share of the cost. The Primary Education Act of 1919 which had recently been passed left it to Municipalities to say whether they would make primary education compulsory (section 6). Even if they decided on making it compulsory, it did not follow that they would be prepared to levy a cess, for under section 17 of the Act, two-thirds of the Commissioners must vote in favour of such a cess. The number of Municipalities which would decide on levying the cess would not be large, and if primary education was to be made compulsory (which was what the policy of doubling the number of primary schools in ten years meant according to Mr. Dunn), Govt. must be prepared to shoulder the whole burden that was not covered by free-receipts and such contributions as Municipal funds



permitted. Even if this was possible, there was doubt how the Municipalities were to be persuaded to adopt Mr. Dunn's scheme. The proposal regarding an education committee for each municipality too would require legislation and in any case municipalities would object to the subordination of such committees to the Central education authority. The remarks of Mr. S. W. Goode, Officiating Secretary to the Department of Education, Govt. of Bengal, in this context is interesting to note. Under the Primary Education Act the Govt. had certain powers to do something. Section 4 was the palladium (safeguard). Govt. might direct school accommodation to be provided. The Municipality could obey this direction by levying an education cess under section 17. If it refused to do so, Govt. could adopt coercive measures under section 64 or 65, Bengal Municipal Act (1884). This was a drastic action, but the Primary Education Act might otherwise remain a dead letter (section 4 is better than any other such Act in India). The Govt. would have to make up its mind as to the course it should pursue, if Municipalities refused to impose an education cess, for existing resources would not finance any large programme for the expansion and improvement of primary education.

#### **District Boards :**

Mr. Dunn deals with the possible line of action with regard to District Boards in paragraph 9. The unit of administration in rural areas was the District Board. "This institution used to work in two ways,—firstly, by aiding a large number of primary schools, about three-quarters of the whole number in rural Bengal; and secondly by building and maintaining select number of model primary schools distributed on a given plan through out Panchayati Unions. The latter scheme, created in Eastern Bengal was scientifically distributed. There were 7,580 Panchayati Unions and of these 2,772 had been provided with model Union Primary schools which were very efficient and popular ; 2,580 were already in possession of good upper primary schools ; and so 2,228 remain to be provided with model or Board lower primary schools. The District Boards were hopeless in the treatment of the aided schools. These were three-quarters



of the whole. Their financial position as well as management were far from satisfactory. The system of aiding primary schools amounted briefly to the giving out of small doles to schools that spring up when and where they please. The result was overlapping on the one hand, and inadequate provision on the other. Mr. West also spoke unequivocally against overlapping and pleaded for concentration and proper distribution of schools. Mr. Dunn suggested that before implementing the doubling policy of Govt. of India, there should be some system for control of primary education in rural areas. In face of these facts, it would be iniquitous to talk vaguely of a policy of multiplication".<sup>20</sup>

Mr. Dunn estimated 1,200,000 boys at school. "This represented nearly half the number of boys of primary school-going age. It follows then that to double the existing numbers reading in schools would provide education for almost the whole male population of primary school-going age. There would be at the end of ten years 2,400,000 boys in primary schools. The doubling policy involved compulsory education in rural as well as in municipal areas. The Govt. of India were not aware of this fact when, in their letter of 2nd Sept., 1918, they spoke of compulsion, being impracticable, and the consideration of their ten years' policy which virtually meant compulsion. It is obvious that compulsion alone would be able to increase the number of boys at school from 12 to 24 lakhs in a single decade. Of the 12 lakhs of boys, at least 11½ lakhs were from rural areas, where anything like compulsion would be detested and would be regarded as an unbearable injustice. The doubling policy was, therefore, inevitably a policy of compulsion, and as such for rural areas it was both undesirable and unworkable."<sup>21</sup> There was little force in Mr. Dunn's paragraph 6.

In paragraph 9 of his Note Mr. Dunn lays stress on the Panchayati system in Eastern Bengal. We have already referred that there remained to be built 2,228 Union lower primary schools of model type. 2,772 such schools had

20. Paragraph 5 of Dunn's note.

21. Paragraph 6 of Dunn's note.



already been constructed. There was no reason why this programme should be held up. This should be completed within ten years. This item alone would add to the capital expenditure on primary education a sum of Rs. 2,22,800/- per annum (Rs. 1,000/- per school). The lower primary schools of Eastern Bengal were inferior type. The Govt. decided to improve those schools with the help of Imperial grants. After the constitution of the Bengal Presidency this system was adopted in Western Bengal. In this system the schools were of a permanent type and teachers were paid reasonable remuneration. These schools were managed by District Boards with the help of Imperial Grants. The number of schools was doubled in Eastern Bengal and 100 such schools were started in Western Bengal, while 150 schools were transferred to the District Boards. No progress was, however, made due to war conditions. On receipt of Imperial grant of Rs. 5½ lakhs in 1918 advantage was taken to provide Rs. 1,20,000/- for the extension of this system. The recurring Imperial grant of Rs. 5½ lakhs was to open 120 new Panchayati Union schools for boys annually. But the number must necessarily decline every year, unless more funds were made available. "It had been ascertained that the Boards were willing to undertake the work, provided sufficient funds were placed at their disposal for the purpose."

It was very different with the aided schools which amounted to about three-quarters of the whole number of primary schools in Bengal. We have already said that the aided school system was more or less a failure. Much money had been wasted because of the ill-distribution of schools. These were inefficient ; teachers' remuneration was very low and management was extremely unsatisfactory. As this system constituted the bulk of the rural primary schools. Mr. Dunn remarked that the doubling policy was unworkable and unsuitable so far as the District Board areas were concerned. Yet he made certain definite suggestions with regard to rural areas. These are :

1. That aided school system in rural areas should be abandoned as a principle of control because the sys-



tem had failed to justify itself. The District Boards should take over all such schools under their management ;

2. New schools which spring up in response to a natural demand should be taken over at once by District Boards. Normally 900 schools with 18,000 pupils come into existence every year ;
3. A programme of extension should be drawn up which, exclusive of the Panchayati Union schools, would provide for the education of 25 per cent illiterate children. This provision might also be accomplished within a period of ten years. All these new schools should be controlled by the District Boards from their foundation.

The main idea underlying this policy was the need of increased control. District Boards must be made to realise their responsibilities. Briefly, the schools of the future would be erected and run by selected committees of District Boards acting under expert advice. The schools now in existence would continue as grant-in-aid institutions; but it would be the duty of local authorities to improve these by giving them better teachers and by providing them with better houses, hired wherever necessary.

The above outline programme for District Boards would cost, as estimated by Mr. Dunn, an annual capital expenditure of Rs. 9,48,000/- over ten years ; and a final recurring expenditure of Rs. 14,37,600/- beginning in the first year of the period at Rs. 1,43,760/-. New model schools of a permanent type had been given Rs. 1,000/- for buildings ; others had been given Rs. 500/-. A monthly grant of Rs. 10/- had also been allowed for new schools.

Mr. Dunn suggested that the district Boards must take over the whole scheme of primary education. He agreed that "the schools now in existence would continue as grant-in-aid institutions", but the local authority's control must be increased, and this was possible only if the grants-in-aid were worth having. No new schools should be encouraged by grants-in-aid; the District Board "should, whenever possible,



take over and control whatever new schools they could afford to maintain”.

Mr. Dunn proposed also that 600 new schools “on pan-chayati union scale” to cost 60 lakhs initially should be provided. The Govt. should consider the merits of the grant-in-aid system as against the public ownership system.

*A priori* apart from finance, the latter system might be preferable.

But because of large expenditure on secondary education and the war-effects on the total financial position Mr. Dunn’s estimates might seem beyond the resources of the Govt. It was advisable to press the Boards to increase their grants-in-aid (and their control) or to devote their resources mainly to the construction of new model schools. But here again the Boards were not financially sound to spend at the desired level because their hands were tied up as their income was meagre and at the same time inelastic. They could only do so if they were allowed to impose new education cess like the municipalities as proposed in the Primary Education Act 1919.<sup>22</sup>

The question of local finance was all important. Government could not commit itself to any large and extended programme until its position under the new provincial financial settlement was determined.

The District Boards, if they were to assume responsibility on a large scale for elementary education in rural areas, must largely rely on the new Union Boards under the Bengal Village Self-Govt. Act, 1919.

In providing a good school for small groups of villages within a union, the District Board might confine itself to :—

1. subsidising the Union Boards ; and
2. seeing ( through an inspecting agency ) that the money is well spent.

Section 1(2) of the Primary Education Act enabled Government to place the same responsibilities on a Union Committee, that municipalities must shoulder, and presum-

22. Section 17 of the Primary Education Act, 1919.

ably a Union Board, in addition to the rate it might levy under section 17 of Primary Education Act. But here again it cannot be said that District Boards should give up the aided school system and take over all the new schools that would spring up.

The most important question i.e. the finance was not yet solved. No effective progress could be made unless the local bodies took the responsibility of extending primary education by levying a cess, and Govt. supplemented with necessary grants.

Mr. Dunn postulates in the first instance that any scheme for the doubling of the number of boys (in Municipalities as well as in District Boards) now reading in primary schools was unworkable because (1) "to double the existing numbers is to cover the whole population of primary school-going age. This meant compulsory education, which in rural areas would be impossible; and (2) to extend in any large proportion the existing primary schools of Bengal was merely to expand incompetence, and to hand over the public money to a system that had never been clearly realised or controlled".<sup>23</sup>

The first assumption is entirely wrong. It is based on incorrect calculation. If it is correct, doubling does not mean compulsion. To provide facilities for education is a very different thing from compulsory education.

Mr. Dunn sketched out a separate programme for Municipalities and District Board areas. His proposals were briefly :—

**Municipalities :**

- (a) The establishment of 170 model schools,
- (b) The improvement of half the existing schools,
- (c) The starting of new schools for 34,000 illiterates,
- (d) The control to be vested in educational Committees and not in the municipalities. This was impossible under the Bengal Municipal Act.

23. Paragraph 11 of Dunn's Note.



**District Board Areas :**

- (a) That a survey should be made which should show the villages with and without schools ;
- (b) That 223 Panchayati Union schools should be established annually ;
- (c) That 600 other new schools should be started for illiterates ;
- (d) That existing aided schools should continue as such and should be improved ; and
- (e) That no new grants-in-aid should be given by District Boards. Instead of this they should take-over new schools for which there was a natural demand. Assuming that these were only half of the total number that would spring up each year, the capital cost would be 22½ lakhs and the recurring cost 4½ lakhs.

In addition to this he proposed that the Guru-training scheme should be completed in five years and then repeated.

The cost of this programme is shown below :—

|                      | Capital<br>( in lakhs )   | Initial | Recurring<br>( in lakhs )<br>Ultimate |
|----------------------|---------------------------|---------|---------------------------------------|
| Municipalities       | ... 17                    | 1½      | 16½                                   |
| District Board areas | ... 105                   | 1½      | 14½                                   |
| Guru-training scheme | ... 12                    | —       | 6                                     |
|                      | (addi-<br>tional<br>cost) |         | (addi-<br>tional<br>cost)             |

We have so far discussed Mr. Dunn's proposals with regard to Municipalities and District Boards in relation to the doubling policy of Imperial Govt. Let us now concentrate on the Guru-training scheme as proposed by Mr. Dunn and its administrative and financial implications.

Mr. Dunn points out that no real advance could be made in primary education until trained teachers were available for the new and existing schools. He reports that there were 43,000 teachers altogether untrained and 8,500 with some kind of training. There were 111 Guru-training schools with an annual out-put of 1,000 teachers. It is suggested by Mr. Dunn that, in Municipal and District Board areas there

should be built within ten years not less than 1,300 new schools. For staffing these with trained men, at the rate of two for each school, the number to be trained annually will be  $1,300 \times 2 = 2,600$ . The scheme for the improvement of guru-training schools in Bengal referred to by Mr. Dunn and as sanctioned by the Govt. contemplates the establishment of 80 improved schools in 80 subdivisions of the Presidency. Each school was to take 40 Gurus for a one-year course. The total output of trained teachers, therefore, every year would be 3,200, but this would not be sufficient for the new schools. The improved guru-training scheme as sanctioned by the Secretary of State and as estimated by Mr. Dunn would cost Rs. 12,75,000/- in capital and Rs. 6,04,800/- in recurring charges.<sup>24</sup>

If it be completed in five years, it should be repeated to meet the needs of the new schools, and it would involve another programme of expenditure of Rs. 20,80,000 for construction ( $26,000 \times 80$ ) and Rs. 6,45,000/- recurring. The total output of trained primary teachers would then be at least 4,200 ( $3,200 + 1000$ ) each year. Thus Mr. Dunn proposed to raise both the capital and recurring costs. The local bodies should contribute their share to the expenses. Of course, this share should be decided after considering the resources of Municipalities and District Boards.

### **The Divisional Commissioners' Conference Held at Darjeeling in Relation to the Doubling Policy of the Govt. of India and Mr. Dunn's Note Thereon**

The subject of doubling the number of primary schools referred to in Govt. of India's letter No. 750, dated the 2nd Sept., 1918 and Mr. Dunn's note on the same, were discussed at the Divisional Commissioners' Conference (opinions were sought by Mr. S. W. Goode, Offg. Secy, to the Govt. of Bengal) held at Darjeeling in October, 1919. There were two important factors for consideration before the commissioners' conference :—

<sup>24</sup>. Paragraph 10 of Mr. Dunn's Note.



- i. the funds which the Boards and Govt. could provide, and
- ii. the educational needs of each district.

It was now time to decide on a definite programme for the expansion of primary education and the resolutions of the Conference on Mr. Dunn's scheme were as follows :—

**In Municipalities :**

1. that there should be Educational Committees in Municipalities and that the District Deputy Inspector of Schools, when a Commissioner, should be a member of the Education Committee, and when not a Commissioner should be freely consulted,
2. that Mr. Dunn's proposed programme for the establishment of large model schools in the municipalities is approved,
3. that Mr. Dunn's suggestions to improve and rearrange 50 per cent of the existing schools in municipalities and to hire houses to meet the demand upto the number of 34,000 illiterates are on the proper line of progress.

**In Rural Areas :**

4. that the system of establishing model primary schools in Panchayati Unions should be completed as soon as possible. That the grant-in-aid system must be continued for the present, but that it would be desirable to extend the Panchayati Union system as funds become available.
5. that in view of financial difficulties and in the absence of the extension of the Primary Education Act, 1919 it is impossible for the Conference to suggest any further lines on which progress could be made in extending primary education in rural areas. (The Primary Education Act of 1919 was amended in 1921 under Sec. 1(2) of the act to apply its provisions to Union Committees);
6. that as recommended by Mr. Dunn the programme for the provision of Guru-training schools should be

doubled, subject to any modification of the scheme which experience might indicate as necessary.<sup>25</sup>

The execution of a programme, such as this, depended on the co-operation of local bodies, and on the ability of Govt. as well as of the local bodies to provide funds. Mr. Sharp pertinently remarked in his last quinquennial report-- "Future policy will depend on the willingness of local bodies and the people generally to accept compulsion, and on the financial and administrative readjustments which take place."<sup>26</sup> As regards the financial aid of Govt., Bengal was likely to fare badly under the new financial settlement. They also disallowed Rs. 8 lakhs representing the non-recurring Imperial expenditure. Thus in the beginning of the application of the Primary Education Act of 1919 and the new Reform Scheme the entire financial position was in the dark and it was impossible to say whether the scheme was practicable.

The District Board could meet the expenditure involved from four sources :—

1. their ordinary income, i.e. they would divert money from other heads when allotment for education was below 25%,
2. enhancement of the local rate, when it was less than the maximum,
3. the normal annual surplus,
4. new taxation.

In Bengal the first three sources were scarcely available. The local bodies could divert a very low percentage of their income towards primary education. The second source of income was out of the question, as the rate was already levied at the maximum, while only a few boards had sufficient annual surplus to finance large capital schemes. So the only source for income was new taxation.

The total cost of primary schools in Bengal was Rs. 40 lakhs, of which about Rs. 20 lakhs were provided from

<sup>25</sup> The resolutions are contained in paragraphs 240-261 of the proceedings of the Conference, Oct., 1919.

<sup>26</sup> Progress of Education in Bengal (1912-17).



public, and Rs. 20 lakhs from private sources—mainly fees. The proportion met from public funds (roughly half from Imperial Govt. and half from Provincial Govt.) particularly from Provincial funds had been steadily rising.

Given unlimited money, it would be, of course, possible to double the number of schools, but it does not follow that by doubling the number of schools the number of attending boys in schools would be doubled. In the quinquennial ending in 1916-17 the number of boys' schools rose by 14 per cent, but the number of pupils by only 8 per cent, and there was a decrease of 5 per cent in the average attendance at each school.

It would, of course, be all to the good if the number of schools could be doubled, but where was the money to come from ?

1. "So far as municipalities are concerned the Govt. should wait till the Govt. have the returns under the Primary Education Act. In dealing with these the Govt. shall have to be careful about the overlapping of schools to which Mr. West refers on pages 56-57 of his report,
2. As regards the District Board areas an educational survey should be made. Mr. West's survey is not sufficient for the purpose,
3. The Govt. should push on as fast as possible with the Panchayati Union Scheme, and if possible, enlist the aid of the District Boards in order to accelerate it."<sup>27</sup>

Now we can have the whole position in brief from the letter of the Secretary to the Govt. of Bengal to the Secretary, the Govt. of India, dated the 18th May, 1920.

In reference to letter No. 750 dated the 2nd Sept., 1918 with regard to the scheme for expansion of primary education among the male population and in consideration of the fact that provincial Govt. would no longer be able to expect any subventions from Imperial funds, the Provincial Govt. of

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27. Note of Mr. L. S. S.O. Malley, Secy., to the Govt. of Bengal, dated 22.12.1919.

Bengal submitted that under Sec. 3 of the Primary Education Act, 1919, the Municipalities were required to submit returns showing the total number of children aged 6 to 10, the number actually attending primary schools and the provision now made for elementary education, the existing schools, their accommodation, staff, equipment. They were also asked to submit a statement of the methods by which the cost could be met and to provide education for all children aged 6 to 11 likely to attend schools voluntarily.<sup>28</sup>

In the meantime, a scheme for the improvement and extension of primary education in the town of Calcutta had been prepared by the D. P.I. which received the approval of the Calcutta Corporation. We shall refer to the scheme in connection of our discussion on the administration and financing of primary education in Calcutta in Chapter IV.

As regards rural areas, progress was made with the Panchayati Union Scheme in Eastern Bengal. This scheme aimed at providing every Panchayati Union with a lower primary school of an improved type to be managed and maintained by the District Board. After the constitution of the Bengal Presidency, it was decided to extend the system to Western Bengal. Imperial recurring grant for the scheme was Rs. 5½ lakhs; 120 new Panchayati Union schools for boys were being opened annually.

Total number of Panchayati Unions in the Bengal Presidency was 7,580. Of these 2,772 had been provided with Union Primary Schools while 2,580 were already in possession of good Primary Schools. So the scheme had to be extended to 2,228 Unions. For completion of the scheme the Govt. of Bengal required larger grants (para 4 of the letter).

For expansion of Primary education in rural areas, in 9/10 of the people of Bengal resided, the District Boards must contribute to the cost as well as Govt. But the Govt. was not willing to bear large sums for the carrying out of the scheme.

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28. Letter No. 172 T Edn.—addressed to the Secretary to the Govt. of India by the Secy., the Govt. of Bengal dated, the 18th May in connection with the letter No. 750, the 2nd Sept., 1918.



In the meantime, it was proposed to have a survey made by a special officer of the existing facilities for primary education in each district, on the basis of which a 10 year programme of expansion and an estimate of cost would be prepared which would be referred to the District Boards for their opinion. Proposals for financing of the scheme would then be worked out and laid before the Minister elected under the new constitutional reforms (para 6 of the letter).

With Mr. West's report and Dunn's suggestions the Govt. of Bengal now had ample material on which to build up at least a skeleton programme. The whole difficulty was funds. No advance in Bengal could be made in this matter until Govt. had power to compel local authorities to contribute their share. The Municipalities were not expected to bear the whole additional expenditure. Hence any further action depended on the decision of the Govt. as to how much Govt. could spare from its own revenues. But Bengal ought to have a programme, clear, definite and detailed, which could be placed before the new minister for consideration. The first necessary thing in this regard was to put forward definite proposals as to what proportion of the additional cost involved should fall on the funds of Municipalities and Provincial revenues.

To get such a programme prepared, it would be necessary to place some educational officer on special duty. To him could be sent all the reports from Municipalities; he would also have Mr. West's report and Dunn's Note before him. Having learnt all he could from the papers as to the problem in Municipalities, he could formulate a general policy, a definite and detailed scheme of expansion which might extend over 10 years. He should also report on the Municipal resources with a view to deciding on definite recorded data how much each could be called upon to spend.

As regards District Boards, they had no power under the present law to raise money. If Government was going to alter the present system, and expect that money would come from the District Boards, it must surely provide necessary funds with a statement of policy and a promise of some assis-

tance from Provincial revenues. The officer on special duty should work out in detail a programme for each District Board area extending over 10 years. A general policy should first of all be sketched by the officer, and then detailed proposal be worked out for the whole area with suggestions as to the funds which could be raised in the area.

Mr. West's figures were based on the census of 1911. So any new programme of primary education should be based on the new census of 1921.

Mr. Evan E. Biss was entrusted with this onerous job.



### CHAPTER III

## THE PRIMARY EDUCATION ACT OF 1919— FIRST STEP TOWARDS FREE AND COMPULSORY EDUCATION.

The Bengal Primary Education Act of 1919 was a landmark on the way to free and compulsory primary education in Bengal. It was the first effective step towards making primary education free and compulsory within the Municipal areas of Bengal Presidency including the Corporation of Calcutta. Though the Gokhale Bill was rejected in the Imperial Legislature, it created a new horizon for making primary education free and compulsory. The passing of the Patel Act in Bombay marked the beginning of a new epoch in primary education in different provinces. The Mont-Ford proposals for constitutional reforms necessitated new orientation of political outlook and thinking as it proposed responsible Govt. in the provinces. Proper exercise of franchise required mass consciousness and education. The Govt. had promised to give some political concessions after the war. The Govt. of India felt the need of spreading mass elementary education for the operation of the new constitutional set up particularly the dyarchy. The ideals of self-Govt. and democratic principle of election as embodied in the Reform scheme could not be fruitful without an educated electorate. The necessity of mass education was not felt in the official circle only, many enlightened and patriotic Indians like Gokhale keenly desired that effective steps should be taken for spreading mass elementary education. It was the crying need of the hour and the soil was already prepared for that.

In introducing the Bengal Primary Education Bill (private) in the Legislative Council in 1917, Mr. S. N. Roy, enlightened and patriotic citizen of Calcutta, indicated in clear terms the main objects and reasons of the proposed Legislation. The Bill was introduced to make primary education compulsory within the municipalities of Bengal including Calcutta and in other selected areas which constituted Union



Committees under section 38 of Bengal Act III of 1885. "Education can only enable a nation to survive the struggle for the fittest. If the masses of the Indian people do not see the light of education they also would in course of time cease to exist as a nation. The signs of the time indicate that unless early steps are taken to educate the masses of the people of India in however rudimentary a form they would not survive as a nation. Education imparted to the masses will not only be a great help to them but also enable this country to hold its own in the near future in respect of agricultural and industrial development." "It is admitted on all hands that unless the masses of the people are educated and intellectually elevated, the country can not advance in any department of public life. All national forces should be developed to their utmost capacity to serve the ends of national-preservation and self-realization. It is also necessary that the masses of the people should take their proper share in the political advancement of the country and for this reason some education is necessary."<sup>1</sup>

"Education is compulsory in most of the advanced countries of the world. In England by the Act of 1870 three new principles were introduced into educational legislation—a compulsory local rate, a representative local authority and compulsory attendance of children at school. In consequence there was not a remote corner in England or Scotland where the inhabitants were not within the reach of public elementary school system. By the end of the 19th century primary education in England was made universal, free and compulsory through various legal enactments. Education, specially primary education, has made great progress in Germany and France. The general character of the time was marked by the steady progress of the masses and the spread of democratic spirit. The aristocracy had lost its former predominance. The middle classes attained legal and political equality. Even in United States, Education was declared compulsory in some states."<sup>2</sup>

"To impart education to the masses is the primary duty of the Govt. The people of this presidency contribute very

1. The Calcutta Gazette—1917. Part IV, p. 41.



largely to the development of primary education. They already contribute 56.3 per cent of the funds. They can not be asked to contribute more. Hence we shall have to depend for the furtherance of primary education mainly upon the revenues of the country."

"The municipalities of the Bombay Presidency are in receipt of handsome contributions from Govt. But such is not the case with the municipalities of Bengal. In Bengal, primary education will not make any real progress without material support from Government."<sup>2</sup>

"The Bill is intended to be applicable to the municipalities including the city of Calcutta and to Union Committees. The Bill is applicable to 'boys' only and not 'girls'. Some form of compulsion is necessary for a diffusion of primary education among the masses and provision has been made for such compulsion. Primary education should first be on a voluntary basis. There must be a sufficient number of schools in the province before the compulsory system is sought to be introduced. If we leave the matter of primary education to the voluntary system it will never spread, it will never prosper. It has not done so in any country and it can not be expected to do so in India or Bengal."

"In case the financial condition of a Municipality does not permit of introducing this measure, power be given to the Municipality to levy an 'education cess' with the sanction of the local Govt., with this proviso that when such a cess is levied, primary education shall be free."<sup>3</sup>

Mr. Roy was of opinion that if the Bill passed it would be of the greatest advantage not only to the public but to the country itself. He quoted from Mill's treatise on "Liberty" "...the state should require and compel education up to a certain standard of every human being who is born its citizens." The masses should be raised at any cost from the depth of ignorance. Only education can raise the condition of the masses. The Bill was just a beginning in the right direction. "We are now passing through a critical period in the history of our country. The dawn of a new era is breaking. Industrial development and popular education should

2. The Calcutta Gazette, 1918, Part—IV (pages 80-84).

3. Ibid, 1917—Part IV, page 41.



proceed hand in hand. There is a cry to elevate the depressed classes and this can be done only by educating them. The Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms also stressed the importance of educating the masses for successful operation of self-Govt. under the new constitution. Highest importance should be attached to the education of the masses, for in education alone lie the germs of the progress and advancement of a country in its political, economic and social spheres. It is for this advancement the present Bill has been introduced."<sup>4</sup> The Bill was referred to a Select Committee for further consideration and it underwent some remarkable and significant changes. The Bill was originally meant for introducing "Compulsory" primary education. "But the Select Committee inserted Part II of the Bill which provided education on voluntary basis. Thus the Select Committee materially modified not only the form but also the intention of the Bill by the introduction of provisions relating to voluntary primary education. The original Bill wanted compulsion, but Part II cries 'halt' to the Municipalities and says to them, "Do not think of compulsion at present, concentrate your energies and resources on the voluntary system. When it comes out successful, then you are to contemplate the adoption of compulsion."<sup>5</sup>

Mr. Kishori Mohan Chaudhuri initiating his motion (Item No. 9 which lost consequently) in the Council for omitting Part II of the Bill pleaded that his main object was that compulsion and taxation should go hand in hand. If compulsory primary education was to be introduced, the taxation would be justifiable. He said that the compulsory education scheme contemplated a provision of education of boys of the age of 6 to 10 only. It was in that view that Part II was not necessary at all, for the scope of the Bill was to deal with compulsory primary education only and that was the original object of the mover, Mr. S. N. Roy.

The Select Committee took the view that the immediate introduction of compulsory primary education was neither desirable nor possible : the transition to compulsory education must be by stages. Before introduction of compulsion in any

4. The Calcutta Gazette, 1918, Part-IVA, pages 1157-65.

5. The Calcutta Gazette, 1919, pages 520-553.



area Govt. must be satisfied that there was ample provision of primary education in that area on voluntary basis. Any municipality desirous of introducing compulsion must submit to the Govt. necessary particulars of primary education in an area where compulsion was sought for. Any attempt to introduce compulsion without preparing the ground would only result in the perpetuation of the then defective system. So the Select Committee tried, by inserting Part II of the Bill, to make organised progress possible. But the real purpose behind such insertion was to avoid financial involvement on the part of the Govt. Immediate introduction of compulsory education would be impossible for financial stringency. The Select Committee was virtually dominated by "yes men" of the Govt. So Part II of the Bill was a clear manoeuvring to avoid financial responsibility.

The Bill of such a magnitude was widely circulated and discussed in both official and non-official circles. It received almost the unanimous support of officials. Many non-official and public bodies also supported this great venture both inside and outside the floor of the Council. Municipalities, District Boards, Union Committees, the Calcutta University, and the different Muhammedan Associations approved the provisions of compulsory free education in the Bill. The Calcutta Corporation also supported the Bill. The Calcutta Corporation and the Indian Association while approving the Bill suggested that there should be a provincial Education Board to control the whole field of the primary education in the Presidency. The Chittagong Municipality while approving the Bill suggested that primary education might be made compulsory provided no education cess was imposed on the municipal rate-payers. The Divisional Commissioners, the District Magistrates, Subdivisional Officers and Deputy Inspectors of Schools also supported the Bill.

There were some instances of disapproval of the Bill and it was on account of the poverty of the country. There were some who thought that the country was too poor to afford to pay for primary education and they were against the imposition of an education cess. The imposition of education cess under section 17 and the role of the Govt. in education was vehemently criticised by contemporary periodicals and news-



papers. "Our country men ought to be enlightened even if it be necessary to levy a new cess for the purpose. Certainly Govt. should supply the fund requisite for defraying the cost of enterprise. Police is maintained at an enormous cost. Police expenditure may be curtailed by forming village committees to maintain law and order. Revenue derived from income tax may also be devoted to the enlightenment of the people. Deficit, if any, may be supplemented by donations from the District Boards."<sup>6</sup>

"Government might make a monopoly of publishing all school books. Income from such publications may also be properly utilised for the establishment of new schools. A net income from this source has been calculated at Rs. 48 lakhs from Rs. 18 lakh students attending schools in the Presidency ..... compulsory education is meaningless unless teaching is imparted freely. Education cess may be levied for the purpose, but in that case Chaukidari tax should be either reduced or withdrawn. Duty on some articles may be levied by the Govt."<sup>7</sup> Noakhali Sammilani held Govt. responsible for the deplorable condition of education in India. Govt. always avoided to take suitable steps for the spread of mass education on some pretext or other. Agitation for Home Rule and Compulsory Free Education should be continued. It demanded more aid to primary schools by the Govt. and increase of pay of the poor teachers as they were very ill-paid.

"The question of spreading mass education ought to occupy the foremost attention of the Govt. But inspite of long and continued agitation over this question, no money is forthcoming. National prosperity and national greatness mainly depend upon this question, yet no material assistance comes from Govt."<sup>8</sup>

"Unless free compulsory education is introduced, the bulk of the people of this country will remain illiterate. So long education will be at the mercy of the bureaucrats, it will never spread. Govt. spend lavishly on police officers and soldiers but sanction very small grants to primary schools. The Govt. is very much unfriendly towards primary schools."<sup>9</sup>

6. The JASOHAR, Feb. 9th, 1918.

7. Noakhali Sammilani, Feb., 11th, 1918.

8. The Bengali (Calcutta) 16th March 1919.

9. The Dainik Basumati, 18th March 1919.



Mr. Roy opined that he was fully aware of the poverty of the country and the difficulties in the way of promoting mass education. Without substantial help from the Govt. the work of primary education couldn't spread. The concluding remarks of Mr. S. N. Roy in the Council debate are worth-mentioning in the context. "This measure of primary education will be a dead letter unless it has the full support of Govt. and unless Govt. will aid this measure by substantial financial assistance. The success of the measure depends on the earnestness of the Govt. on the subject of providing financial help to local bodies. Without substantial aid from Govt. this measure of primary education whether be it on a voluntary basis or on a compulsory basis, will be unsuccessful."<sup>10</sup>

Thus some of the reasons for introducing the Bengal Primary Education Bill, which was entirely a private Bill, may be summarised as Mr. Surendra Nath Roy pleaded during council debate :

1. to make it clear that a compulsory system could not be introduced till there was a complete voluntary system,
2. it would enable Municipalities to raise money specially for education—a power which they did not at the time possess.
3. it would enable Govt. to compel Municipalities to provide properly for education, if they had sufficient funds to do; whether they would have enough money would depend largely on the (a) amount the Govt. itself would provide and (b) the willingness of Municipalities to levy a cess.<sup>11</sup>

The Council debate on the Bill continued for two days, 18th and 19th Feb., 1919 and was passed on the 27th March, 1919.

#### Main Provisions of the Act :

Before we make observations on the efficacy and applicability of the provisions of the Act from Administrative and

10. The Calcutta Gazette, 1919 (Jan-March), Part IVA (pp. 149-220).

11. File 1E7-Progs. Nos. 191-95—State Archives of Bengal.

Financial points of view, we must mention here some of the important sections of Bengal Primary Education Act (Act IV of 1919) of 1919, for our ready reference :

- (a) it extended in the first instance to all Municipalities; later on the Bengal Govt. might extend the provisions of the Act to any area in a Union constituted under the Bengal Local Self-Govt. Act of 1885 (Sec. 1),
- (b) within one year from the commencement of the Act or within such other period as might be prescribed by the Govt., the Municipalities should make a survey of the educational needs in their respective areas, and submit to the Govt. a detailed statement regarding (i) the number of children between the ages of six and ten; (ii) the school accommodation, staff and attendance of pupils at existing primary schools; (iii) the school accommodation, staff and equipment required if suitable provisions were to be made for the primary education of all children between six and ten years of age, of all boys between six and ten years of age; (iv) the existing expenditure incurred by the Municipality and the increased cost that was to be incurred annually in order to provide such school accommodation, staff and equipment; (v) receipts already available and the income from any education cess that might in future be levied; and (vi) the amount of grant or assistance from the Govt. which the Municipal Commissioners considered would be necessary to enable them to provide for primary education within the Municipality, or any part thereof (sec. 3),
- (c) if after complying with the directions of the Govt. the Commissioners were of opinion that the primary education of all boys, not being less than six or more than 10 years of age, should be made compulsory within the Municipality, or any part thereof, they might apply to the Govt. for permission to introduce therein compulsory primary education for such boys; and if the assent of the Govt. was received, primary education should be made compulsory for all such boys (sec. 6),



- (d) the Municipal Commissioners should appoint a school committee and with the previous sanction of the Govt. make rules prescribing the manner in which it should be constituted, the number of its members and its duties, and the steps which it might take to secure the attendance of boys at school (secs. 7 and 15),
- (e) primary education in Bengal, should not ordinarily be free, but when it was made compulsory in any area if a guardian satisfies the school committee that he was unable to pay the fees or any part of the fees payable for his ward, then such a boy should be admitted to a recognised primary school free of charge, or at such reduced fees as the school committee might determine (sec. 14),
- (f) if the existing resources of any Municipality including any grant from the Govt. were not sufficient to cover the cost of primary education within its area, the Commissioners might, with the previous sanction of the Govt. impose a tax, to be called the Education Cess. The cess so levied should be a rate amounting to the sum required, after deducting the Govt. grant and the receipts from the school fees, endowments and contributions, to meet the expenditure on primary education, together with ten per cent above such sum to meet the collection charges and the probable losses due to non-realisation from defaulters; the Govt. might make rules prescribing the manner in which the education cess should be levied (Secs. 17 and 18).<sup>12</sup>

#### Application of the Act :

The Bengal Village Local Self-Government Act was passed in 1919 to develop self-govt. in the rural areas of Bengal. In 1921, the Bengal Primary Education Act of 1919 was amended (Act No. III of 1921) to permit of its application to Unions constituted under the Bengal Village Local Self-Govt. Act, authorising the Union Boards to exercise and perform all or any of the powers and duties conferred on the Municipal Commissioners by the Primary Education Act, subject to such control by the District or Local Board as the Government of Bengal might prescribe.

12. Primary Education Acts in India 1919, J. M. Sen.



Nothing is an unmixed blessing on earth. This was exactly true with regard to the Primary Education Act of 1919. The act was just a guess in the dark as to the amount of educational responsibility which could be delegated to the local authorities. Under section 3 of the Act the Municipalities were required to submit returns to the Government as regards their present provision of elementary education, e.g., the schools in existence, their accommodation, staff and equipment. They would be required to prepare a programme for providing all children aged 6 to 10 with elementary education on voluntary basis together with an estimate of cost and a statement of the methods by which the cost could be met, e.g., fees, municipal grants and Govt. contributions. It was proposed that Govt. should take power, on receipt of these statements and after considering the conditions and resources of the municipalities (a) to order any Municipality to take over the complete management of all primary schools; and (b) to authorise the Municipality to levy an education cess. But submission of returns was not made obligatory on the part of the Municipalities. Many of them did not bother about it. They were not willing to take measures as desired by the Govt. and expressed in the Act. Most of them were reluctant to impose education cess as embodied in the Act in anticipation of popular resentment. Even rate-payers were opposed to the imposition of an education cess. The Mahiganj Rate-payers Association in a meeting held on 23rd January, 1921 unanimously decided to oppose the levy of education cess in the Rangpur Municipality.††

A survey of the existing state of education in municipalities was no doubt necessary. It was desirable for Government to see that before introducing the principle of compulsion it should be seen that what was required was being done. Hence a statement was to be prepared and submitted to the Govt. for proper scrutiny. That was a statement which ought to be the necessary basis of information before compulsory primary education was introduced. Out of 114 municipalities, 87 submitted returns and of these only 35 were complete. Since there was no compulsion to submit returns, Government could not

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††Notes—Only two Municipalities Rangpur and Berhampore agreed to levy education cess.



compel them to do so. Without initiative and eagerness on the part of the Municipalities no scheme of providing good primary education could be successful. This was actually the ultimate result. The Act remained inoperative or ineffective in many Municipalities as the response on their part was little or there was no response.

Now comes the question of providing voluntary education by the municipalities under section 4 of the Act. This section was criticised by many, both inside and outside the Council chamber. The critics argued that without compulsion the provisions of the act would remain virtually ineffective and there would be no progress of education, and Govt. was avoiding financial commitment because compulsion meant large financial involvement. But it was contended that unless proper provision was made for voluntary education, compulsion would be meaningless. Under sec. 4 Government could direct the commissioners to make suitable arrangements for primary education on voluntary basis. But Government remained a spectator in case of non-fulfilment of that direction by the Municipalities. It was proposed that Govt. should have power to compel them to introduce voluntary measures within a definite period. But it was necessary to specify the nature of compulsion. Again the municipalities were required to impose education cess for the purpose of introducing voluntary education as well. But they might refuse to do so and actually this happened. The Govt. could not compel them to do so even in the case of providing voluntary education. This was perhaps the greatest flaw in the act. Section 4 was no doubt a good provision but there was little chance of its proper application in right earnest. There was no compulsion on the part of the Municipalities to levy education cess whether for voluntary education under section 4 or for compulsory education under section 6.

Section 6 of the Primary Education Act of 1919 left it to the Municipalities to say whether they would make primary education compulsory. It was, of course, taken as a principle that compulsory education might be introduced when proper provision had been made for primary education on voluntary basis. The idle and parsimonious Municipalities took the advantage. Most of them except two avoided compulsion. So,



compulsion under Part III was only a paper compulsion. In the original bill there was only provision for compulsory education. But the Select Committee later inserted the Part II of the Act. This was done only to make adequate provision of primary education on voluntary basis. That excuse was perhaps very much weak. Compulsory measure was the only way in the right direction. To remove illiteracy within a reasonable period from Bengal this compulsion was absolutely necessary. The supreme necessity of compulsion need not be over emphasised. Even to-day compulsion has not been introduced in West Bengal, and the main cause is inadequate finance. Thus today's lag can be traced back to the days of the Act of 1919. Truly speaking, compulsion was not welcomed by the Govt., the municipal commissioners and the rate-payers. Compulsion meant larger expenditure and that should be borne by the Govt. as well as the municipalities. The Govt. was not inclined to afford that assistance to the municipality which it might consider necessary in order to supplement its resources. Actually this happened in course of time. Most of the municipalities did not agree to impose compulsion and to levy education cess for the purpose except Chittagong Municipality and Ward No. IX of the Calcutta Corporation. Only two municipalities Rangpur and Berhampur were agreeable to levy education cess and provide education on voluntary basis. Thus, section 6 remained a dead letter and the condition of mass education in Bengal was almost in the same state as it was before the passing of the Primary Education Act of 1919. Thus the main purpose of the Act was defeated because compulsion remained only in paper. No institution was compelled to introduce compulsion. Many pleaded for abolition of Part II of the Act and immediate introduction of compulsion as the resources of the municipalities permitted such a bold step if they were assisted by the Govt. But Govt. was reluctant to do that under the changed financial relation between the Central Govt. and the provincial Govt. Under the Mont-Ford Reforms, particularly paragraph 206 of the Report on the Reform Scheme, Bengal Govt. would have a net provincial surplus of only 10 lakhs. Hence the Govt. was not in a position to undertake large financial responsibility. Its income was inelastic as



well as inadequate. But without Govt's definite contribution which should at least be two-thirds of the total recurring and non-recurring expenditure to provide compulsory education, section 6 of the Act was bound to be ineffective and it actually happened so. Compulsory education meant larger contribution by the Govt. than for education on voluntary basis. If primary education was to be made compulsory, it should be first made free and the Govt. must be prepared to shoulder the whole burden that was not covered by fee-receipts and such contributions as Municipal funds permitted. Section 14 of the Act was not clear in this respect. It merely stated that remission of fees might be allowed by the school committee. But this was not desirable. When primary education was made compulsory in any area it should be declared free. The Govt. as well as Municipalities simply avoided financial commitment. Thus the greatest difficulty was with finance. The Govt. followed a dilatory policy. Evidently the alien Govt. was not sincere in its attempt to extend primary education in the Presidency. It was not inclined to shoulder additional financial burden whereas it was increasing day by day its expenditure on general and police administration. Reserved subjects under Mont-Ford Reforms were financed in an increasing rate whereas the transferred subjects and the public utility services like education were starved. Public opinion resented this state of affairs. The Primary Education Act was implemented in a half-hearted manner and the ultimate success was far from satisfactory.

The only way out was the imposition of education cess under section 17 of the Act by the Municipalities to augment their financial resources. The imposition of education cess was inevitable to carry out any effective scheme of primary education. But sub-section 2 of section 17 of the Act did not allow the Municipality to levy an education cess except by the vote of two-thirds of the Commissioners. Imposition of a cess was left in the Act to the discretion of the Municipalities. But this was a dangerous flaw in the Act because most of the municipalities avoided the imposition of cess in fear of opposition or disapproval and thereby the very purpose of the Act was defeated. There was no compulsion on the part of the municipalities to impose education cess. If education cess



was to be levied, it should be levied by all means. Without such imposition primary education could not be made free and compulsory. It should be a precondition for an advance in primary education. A determined effort was needed on the part of the municipalities to take money from the people and give it back to them in the shape of good primary education. No hesitation, no financial or political fears should stand in the way.

It was pleaded in some quarters that in the original bill the education cess was proposed to be levied only for the purpose of compulsory education but in the amended Bill (as amended by the Select Committee) the cess was proposed to be levied for the purpose of financing voluntary education as well. Before an education cess was levied there must be some progress of primary education at its "voluntary stage" which would justify the imposition of an education cess preparatory to the introduction of compulsory education.<sup>13</sup> But no such stage was created in the Act for such an imposition.

The crucial question was whether the levy of an education cess should be optional or compulsory. If it were only optional, it would be the discretion of the local bodies to impose it or not. Some might impose, others not. In that case no real advance would be made. If it were compulsory, the Govt. would be under obligation to make grants of two-thirds of the total amount required for the scheme of expansion. In fact the imposition of education cess in the Primary Education Act of 1919 was voluntary. It depended entirely on the volition of the Municipality concerned. The Act was thus permissive in nature. It did not help at all in the case of idle or parsimonious local authority. Hence the Govt. should have a clear say in the matter. The Provincial Govt. would, therefore, be given power of compulsion which it might exercise upon local authorities. It was necessary to specify the nature of compulsion because under the existing law<sup>14</sup> the Govt. might suspend completely any Municipality. This was a very drastic step to suspend the whole municipality because of the failure of one department. In England the

13. The Calcutta Gazette, April, pages 520-553—Rai Radha Charan Pal moved a motion (item No. 23) for such a stage. But the motion was lost.

14. Section 65 of the Bengal Municipal Act of 1884.



then Local Board could take over any one department of a municipality for maladministration. The desirability of such a power was obvious in Bengal.<sup>15</sup> It would be necessary to extend such powers to District Boards when the Act would be extended to Union Boards. The Government did not make up its mind as to the course, it should pursue, if municipalities refused to impose education cess, for existing resources would not finance any large programme for the expansion and improvement of primary education. Most of the Municipalities took advantage of the situation and the inevitable result was that the Primary Education Act of 1919 was virtually cold stored for all practical purposes. For the real success of the Act both section 6 and 17 should have been enforced simultaneously.

No special provision had been made in the Act to enforce its provisions in any area whose local authority had made default in any of the requirements of the Act. Provision should have been made to the effect that if the local authority in any area failed to carry out the provision of the Act, the Govt. of Bengal should appoint such person or persons as might be considered necessary to carry out its provisions in any local area, and any person so appointed should exercise all the powers of a local authority including powers for the assessment and collection of education cess under the Act. Section 1(2) of the Primary Education Act enabled Govt. to place the same responsibilities on a Union Committee, that municipalities must shoulder, and presumably a Union Board, in addition to the rate it might levy under its Act, might levy an education cess under section 17, Primary Education Act. The Act was amended in 1921 to extend its provisions to Union Committees presumably Union Boards under the Bengal Village Self-Govt. Act, 1919. Some introduced schemes of expansion on voluntary basis. The question of finance was the most important thing. This had to be solved satisfactorily. The rate was already levied at the maximum, while a few boards had a sufficient annual surplus to finance large capital scheme. So the only source for additional revenue was new taxation, i.e. levying of an education cess.

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15. Report of the working of the municipalities in Bengal, 1916-17, page 4, sec. 13.



No effective progress could be made unless the local bodies shouldered responsibility of extending primary education by levying an education cess. The question of local finance was most important. The provincial Govt. also must contribute a definite share in this great venture and it should be at least  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the total expenditure.

The problem of rural education was very much difficult as 9/10th of the school-going children lived in rural areas. Real success of the Primary Education Act of 1919 depended on the extension of the Act to Union Committees or Boards. But their income was so low (Rs. 1,150 annually) that they were unable to undertake any scheme of expansion involving heavy expenditure. Hence the Panchayati Union Scheme must be pressed for and that also needed financial assistance from the Govt. The Govt. should contribute substantially towards the implementation of the Act of 1919. But it was also under heavy financial strain due to the new financial adjustment under the Reforms Scheme. The income of the Provincial Govt. was limited and inelastic. In spite of this, it should have diverted some income towards primary education which was in the list of "Transferred Subjects" under the Reform scheme by curtailing its fat expenditure on general and police administration. The Bengal Retrenchment Committee of 1923 recommended curtailment of expenditure, but that was intended for the "Transferred Subjects" and not the "reserved ones". But the alien and imperialist Govt. had little or no intention to do that and the reason is obvious. It had to face the growing national discontent culminating in multifarious terrorist activities in Bengal Presidency. The inevitable result was the half-hearted implementation of the Primary Education Act of 1919. The goal of compulsion was thus not reached and even today we feel the evil effects of it.

It is true that in the absence of local initiative on the part of municipalities, District Boards or Union Boards no Govt. can spread primary education only through legal provisions. Still the role of the State in developing primary education need not be over emphasised. "The state is the citizen writ large, and the citizen is the state writ small." Therefore, the responsibility of the State in the matter of education is great. It should never be said—"there is no money available for



educational improvements". All over the world, great advances are being made in educational facilities. Many countries spend on the improvement of physical and intellectual attainments of citizens, and such money is made available as required. It is the fundamental duty of the state to extend and to make available to the poorest citizen all kinds of education including primary education.

The role of the Govt. particularly its policy of imposing education cess was under severe criticism by the contemporary public opinion. The natural vehicles of such public resentment were the newspapers, magazines and periodicals of the time. The *Sanjibani* (Cal.), 10th July, 1919 severely criticised and condemned the reduction of educational expenditure by the Govt. in view of the fact that "Education" was a transferred subject under the charge of an Indian Minister for education.<sup>16</sup>

Government set apart a larger balance than before for police and other reserved departments. "No where in the world is education starved to feed the police and the railway".<sup>17</sup> The "*Pravashi*", Falgoun, 1920 wrote, "we understand new taxes will be imposed for the spread of primary education. This is by no means desirable. In Govt. resolution on educational reforms we find no promise, or even suggestion that they will accord sufficient financial help to the cause of education". "*Prajabandhu*", 20th Sept. 1920 praised the Govt. endeavour to spread free and compulsory primary education, but strongly objected to an education cess, which would create difficulties for the poorer classes, who were already suffering from over-taxation. "People are already over-taxed and as such any new taxation is objectionable and out of the question. Additional taxation may be levied on the rich and the well-to-do".<sup>18</sup>

The Hindu Rajika, 24th April, 1922 held Govt. responsible for the widespread illiteracy in the country. It held that the Govt. thought that if education spread it would go against their interests. From the very beginning Govt. was against mass education. That is why it supported the Down-

16. Report on Indian Newspapers and Periodicals, July, 1919.

17. Report on Native Papers—1921, *Dainik Basumati*, 5th July.

18. *The Mussalman* (Cal.), 18th Jan., 1926.



ward Filtration Theory. On the same ground the Primary Education Bill of late Mr. Gokhale was rejected, and so much delay and vacillation was being done in giving effect to the Primary Education Act of 1919.

"Alien bureaucracy was not eager to spread education in our country. They were intentionally curtailing educational expenditure, while Municipalities and District Boards with their meagre income were gradually increasing their educational budget."<sup>19</sup> "The alien Govt. had transferred the responsibility of educating the masses to the shoulders of the Indian just to prove them unfit for the purpose."<sup>20</sup>

"In spite of persistent cry for more money for education Govt. is decreasing its contribution, whereas the public in Bengal is increasing its contribution."<sup>21</sup>

"Only 5% of the people receive school education. Govt. expenditure on education is the lowest in Bengal whereas Bengal contributes highest to the Imperial exchequer. According to Meston Settlement this contribution was 87%. The proportion of fees to total expenditure is the highest in Bengal. In no other province in India voluntary contribution is so great as in Bengal. But progress of primary education is not satisfactory in Bengal. This is chiefly due to the apathy and indifference of the Govt. It is indifferent to the real interest of the people. They have no real concern for the well-being of the people. The future of the country is clouded with the darkness of illiteracy. The money of poor countrymen is spent in various other ways excepting in furtherance of their education."<sup>22</sup> "If people pay education cess its control should be in the hands of those who contribute it and not in the hands of European bureaucrats."<sup>23</sup>

Lord Lytton's convocation address at the Dacca University in 1925 clearly revealed the real intention of the alien ruler in the matter of mass education in our country. His Excellency had practically given the final "Jabab" that his Govt. would not be able to do much for removing from this

19. The Ananda Bazar Patrika, 22nd Jan., 1924.

20. Bande Mataram, 5th May, 1924.

21. Ibid, 7th March, 1925.

22. "Hindusthan", Cal. 9th March 1925.

23. Nayak (Cal.), 17th Jan. 1926.



land the "stigma of illiteracy." "On the present scale of local and provincial taxation, he maintained, any large contribution from the public exchequer is out of question. Education and sanitation are transferred subjects. The people of Bengal can do just as they like in this matter."<sup>24</sup> This was a very frank and clear official statement. Lord Lytton hinted that the adequate solution of the problem of education and sanitation of the country required the imposition of fresh taxation. But there was no guarantee that the extra income from such taxation would be spent on nation-building subjects instead of public administration or any other reserved subject.

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24. Amrita Bazar Patrika (Cal.), 10th Mar., 1925.

#### CHAPTER IV

### ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCING OF PRIMARY EDUCATION IN THE CITY OF CALCUTTA.

In the beginning of the present century the condition of primary education in the city of Calcutta was most unsatisfactory in respect of both quantity (expansion) and quality (improvement). This is very much evident from the various Government reports, private opinions expressed in different newspapers and periodicals, the official correspondence between the authorities of the Calcutta Corporation and the Govt. of Bengal, and between the Govt. of Bengal and the Department of education, Govt. of India. Towards the close of the 1st World War the Govt. of India admitted the necessity of mass education and accordingly it formulated in 1917, a scheme of expansion of primary education. The Govt. of India communicated its decision in its letter No. 750 2nd Sept., 1918 to the Govt. of Bengal. The sole object of the scheme was doubling the numbers of the existing school-going children of the male population of British India. The scheme desired

that :—

- (i) Efforts should be made to double the present number of pupils in boys primary schools in ten years ;
- (ii) Of the additional expenditure thus involved one-third should be met by local bodies and the rest by Government ;
- (iii) Local Bodies should establish and maintain the facilities requisite to carry out the above scheme, and should, when necessary, be empowered to raise further taxes for the purpose. They would not be required to make provision for the training of teachers and for the maintenance of the inspecting staff.<sup>1</sup>

Though the proposals made by the Govt. of India regarding expansion of elementary education were negatived by the Secretary of State<sup>2</sup> yet an announcement to the above effect

1. File No. IE-20. May, 1920 Paogs. No. 25-State Archives of Bengal.  
2. File No. Edn. B-May 1921 (Progs. Nos. 344-379)—National Archives of India.



in Sept. 1917 was sufficient to have given wide-spread satisfaction all over the country. The various provinces were at work in the formulation of provincial schemes.

Before the passing of the Primary Education Act in 1919, at the request of the Govt. of Bengal, Mr. T. O. D. Dunn, Inspector of Schools, Presidency Division, (later officiating D. P. I.) made a survey of the then conditions of primary education on the 25th Feb. 1918. This survey included both the Municipal and District Board Areas of Bengal. In the mean time, a scheme for the improvement and extension of primary education in the town of Calcutta had been prepared by Mr. Dunn in line with the Primary Education Bill. The scheme in brief provided for :—

1. the establishment of a training college for 100 teachers ;
2. the building of 13 model schools each accommodating 350 boys and one model girls' school for 200 girls ;
3. the improvement annually of 5 percent of the existing boys' schools as well as of girls' schools, and
4. the taking over and the improvement of such new schools as would spring up every year.

The scheme was outlined in the Bengal Govt. letter No. 172T Edn. of the 18th May, 1920 and it appeared to be a move in the right direction.\*

In connection with Mr. Dunn's report on the subject of the improvement and expansion of primary education in Calcutta, D. P. I. (Mr. W. C. Wordsworth) in his letter No. 281 dated the 28th April, 1919 had submitted his proposals. The problem was mainly a financial one. D. P. I.'s proposals only tried to give effect to some of the proposals made by Mr. Dunn at a total capital cost of Rs. 20,92,400 and an ultimate recurring cost of Rs. 1,50,378/-. The D.P.I. recommended a five years' programme after which the whole question should be reconsidered de novo. His recommendations are given here in brief :—

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3. A true copy of the letter is given in Appendix No. I—  
National Archives of India.
  4. File No. 1-E-15 Prog. March Nos. 9.15—State Archives of Bengal.



(a) *Primary Schools* : 20 Model primary schools to be established during the quinquennium, 4 in each year with accommodation of 300 pupils, at a total annual cost of Rs. 4,12,000/- capital and Rs. 19,920/- recurring. In addition, 28 boys schools were to be improved at a non-recurring cost of Rs. 28,000/- and an ultimate recurring cost of Rs. 57,738/- ;

(b) *Education Committee* : The D. P. I. supported the proposal for an education committee, for an organised system of control of primary schools in Calcutta and for proper disbursement of the contributions by the Govt. and the Corporation. For the control of primary education in Calcutta there should be a joint Committee of representatives of the Corporation and of the Education Department with an executive agency. The suggested Education Committee should consist of :—

- (1) The Vice-Chairman of the Calcutta Corporation—President,
- (2) Two representatives of the Calcutta Corporation be elected by the Commissioners,
- (3) The Assistant Inspectress of Schools for Calcutta,
- (4) Another lady to be nominated by the Chairman of the Corporation,
- (5) An Inspecting Officer of the Education Department of a status not lower than that of an assistant inspector to be nominated by the Inspector,
- (6) The District Inspector, Calcutta—Secretary.

The functions of the Committee were to be as follows :—

- (a) to advise the Inspector of Schools on the general policy regarding the scales of remuneration of teachers, equipments of schools, selection of sites for the establishment of new schools ;
- (b) to submit an annual report on primary education in Calcutta ;
- (c) to submit annually the budget estimates and schemes of development for the ensuing year ;
- (d) to administer all Govt. and Municipal funds available for primary education in Calcutta ;



- (e) to work out definite projects for the improvement of individual schools and to put them into effect ;
- (f) to control the subordinate inspecting staff attached to Calcutta ;
- (g) to manage and maintain the model primary schools.

The executive agency was to consist, for the time, of one District Deputy Inspector, one Deputy Inspector, two Sub-Inspectors and four Inspecting Pandits. It was proposed that the District Deputy Inspector and an Assistant Inspector should be on the Education Committee which should have the Chairman of the Corporation as its President instead of the Vice-Chairman. Mr. Wordsworth, then D. P. I., revised his proposals considering the financial aspect. His proposals were now moderate and almost in the same line with that of Mr. T. O. D. Dunn. The revised scheme is evident from the D. P. I.'s letter No. T18 dated the 9th Oct., 1919.<sup>5</sup> The revised programme was as follows :—

- (a) the building of 13 new boys' model primary schools, each to accommodate 350 boys. Of these three were to be existing institutions, which could be converted into model primary schools at a cheaper cost ;
- (b) the establishment of a training college for 100 teachers ;
- (c) the foundation of one girls' model primary school ;
- (d) the provision of funds to take up such new schools as would come into existence every year and to improve the large number of Grants-in-aid schools.

It was proposed that the programme (a) to (c) above should be completed in five years thus :—

|  |     |                |  |
|--|-----|----------------|--|
| <b>First Year :</b> One training College, one Girls' model primary school, |     |                |  |
| two model primary schools for boys and one Maktab,                         |     |                |  |
| Capital expenditure  | ... | Rs. 8,63,938/- |  |
| Recurring expenditure  | ... | Rs. 79,641/-   |  |
| <b>Second Year :</b> Two model primary schools for boys.                   |     |                |  |
| Capital expenditure  | ... | Rs. 3,89,430/- |  |
| Recurring expenditure  | ... | Rs. 26,454/-   |  |
| <b>Third Year :</b> Two model primary schools for boys and one Maktab.     |     |                |  |
| Capital expenditure  | ... | Rs. 3,29,250/- |  |
| Recurring expenditure  | ... | Rs. 28,878/-   |  |

5. File No. 1-E-15, Progs. Nos. 9-15-States Archives of Bengal.



**Fourth Year : Two Maktabas.**

|                       |     |                |
|-----------------------|-----|----------------|
| Capital expenditure   | ... | Rs. 2,44,960/- |
| Recurring expenditure | ... | Rs. 18,396/-   |

**Fifth Year : Two Maktabas.**

|                       |     |                |
|-----------------------|-----|----------------|
| Capital expenditure   | ... | Rs. 2,07,050/- |
| Recurring expenditure | ... | Rs. 21,528/-   |

The scheme indicates that the Govt. had taken into consideration education of both the communities of the City of Calcutta. The Education sub-committee of the Calcutta Corporation accepted the programme as outlined above and suggested that of the total capital expenditure of Rs. 20,34,628/- Govt. should pay two-thirds, the Corporation meeting the remaining one-third. As regards the total recurring cost, the Corporation should bear the entire charges, Govt. continuing their existing contribution of Rs. 32,644/-. The Municipal Commissioners considered these proposals. They finally approved the scheme and decided that the capital as well as recurring expenditure involved should be apportioned equally between the Govt. and the Corporation. The following resolutions of the Municipal Commissioners were adopted<sup>6</sup>:—

1. "That the scheme prepared by the Hon'ble Mr. T.O.D. Dunn, Officiating Director of Public Instruction, for the improvement of primary education in Calcutta by the provision of a limited number of model schools, by taking over new schools every year, by improving a certain proportion every year of existing schools which are capable of improvement, and by the provision of a Training College for teachers be generally accepted ;"
- (2) "That the capital expenditure involved be apportioned between Govt. and the Corporation in the proportion of half and half and the recurring expenditure be shared equally by the Corporation and the Govt. and that a Joint School Committee be established, consisting of representations of the Corporation and the Govt., in whom the control of primary education be vested."

6. Resolution No. 493 of the Calcutta Corporation dated the 18th Sept., 1919.



These resolutions were communicated to Govt. of Bengal with the Chairman's letter No. 3623, dated the 24th Nov. 1919. The reply of the Govt. to the above letter was communicated with their letter No. 554, dated the 9th March, 1920. The orders of the Govt. were briefly as follow :—

- (a) Govt. communicated their approval to the scheme for the improvement of primary education in Calcutta as drawn up by the Education Department ;
- (b) Govt. would not give any undertaking to meet any part of the recurring expenditure which was estimated at Rs. 4½ lakhs ;
- (c) Provided the recurring cost were met by the Corporation, Government would be willing :—
  - (i) to meet the whole of the capital cost of a Training College, estimated at Rs. 2,68,197/-,
  - (ii) to contribute Rs. 10,000/- annually for three years only towards the recurring charges of the Training College, and
  - (iii) to provide three-fourths of the capital cost estimated at approximately Rs. 20 lakhs for the rest of the scheme, the balance being provided by the Corporation.
- (d) A *General Committee* should be constituted under Executive orders to advise the Corporation in regard to the supervision and control of primary education.

“The Corporation of Calcutta accepted the apportionment mentioned above, subject to condition that the Govt. of Bengal reconsider the question of contributing to the recurring as well as to the capital cost of the scheme. The Corporation had at the same time expressed a desire that a start should be made at once with the scheme and that the first year's programme of improvement should be taken up immediately” (Paragraph 3 of the letter No. 1667 Education dated Cal. the 16th Nov., 1920 from the Secretary to the Govt. of Bengal to the Secretary, Govt. of India).

The Special Committee referred to above and the Corporation met again (13th and 18th Aug. respectively, 1920) and decided to write to Govt. for the reconsideration of the ques-



tion of apportionment of cost of primary education in Calcutta. Accordingly the Chairman addressed the Govt. of Bengal in his letter No. S2095, dated the 21st Aug., 1920.<sup>8</sup> In this letter the Corporation suggested a division of both the capital and recurring expenditure into half and half basis. Paragraph 3 of the letter reveals that "the Commissioners regret that Govt. cannot see their way to bear any portion of the recurring expenditure. They desire to point out that while the liability on account of capital cost can always be more or less definitely ascertained, and will only involve periodic payments, the recurring expenditure is a somewhat indeterminate figure, and may, the Commissioners apprehend, impose a constantly growing burden on their current revenues and prove to be beyond their resources if, as is not unlikely, the present programme of improvement should require expansion or if it is hereafter found necessary to make primary education in Calcutta free and compulsory. The Commissioners, therefore, feel considerable diffidence in accepting a liability, the full extent of which can not be gauged at present, and they prefer an arrangement under which they can share this liability with Govt." It is curious enough that the Govt. of Bengal was not in a mood to share equally the expenditure for providing primary education in the second biggest city in the British Empire. On some pretext or other it refused to shoulder financial responsibility as proposed justly by the Corporation. This is evident even from para 4 of the letter of the Secretary to the Govt. of Bengal No. 1667 Education dated Cal., the 16th Nov., 1920.<sup>9</sup> In another letter (para 2) the Govt. of Bengal, Education Department No. 560, dated Calcutta, the 8th March, 1921,<sup>10</sup> stated that they had reconsidered the question of their contribution to the recurring as well as the capital cost of the scheme of primary education, but they regretted that financial stringency precluded them from acceding to the request of the Corporation. They sanctioned the payment of the grant of Rs. 3 lakhs to the Corporation during the year 1921-22 for an early start

8. File No. 1E-18(1) 1922—State Archives—Appendix III carries the true copy of the letter.
9. Appendix—IV.
10. File No. 1E-18(6)—1922—State Archives of Bengal. True copy of the letter is annexed in Appendix—II.



with the schools and requested the Corporation to take steps to constitute a *General Committee* to advise the Corporation in regard to the supervision and control of primary education in Calcutta. In the last mentioned letter the Govt. of Bengal intimated to the Corporation that the necessary sanction to the expenditure amounting to Rs. 16½ lakhs spread over five years had been obtained from the Secretary of State as proposed by this Govt. in its letter No. 1667 Edn. dated Cal., 16th Nov., 1920 to the Secy., Govt. of India. The sanction of the Govt. of India was necessary to the grant of this amount under rule III 10(12)(b) of their Finance Dept. Resolution No. 361 E. A. dated the 24th July, 1916. The sanction of the Secy. of State for the scheme was received in Feb. 1921.

It is evident from the Secretary's Note, dated the 5th June, 1919 that the scheme was approved and accepted by the Finance Deptt., that Govt. agreed to provide for a total capital expenditure of Rs. 16,50,000/- i.e. 15 lakhs for primary schools and Rs. 1,60,000/- for a training college. It was also decided that Govt. should not contribute anything towards the recurring expenditure for the new primary schools to be started in Calcutta.

The Govt. of India moved to the Secretary of State through a telegram for sanctioning of the scheme. But the Govt. of India itself was trying to divert its financial responsibility to the elected Minister under the reformed constitution. In paragraph 3 of its letter No. 1543 dated Delhi, the 22nd December, 1920 addressed to the Secy. to the Govt. of Bengal such a move was already expressed.<sup>11</sup>

In May 1921, the Corporation by their resolution No. 115 agreed that the aforesaid General Committee should be constituted as proposed by Govt., and that it should be composed of 12 as follows :—

- (a) "The Chairman of the Corporation,
- (b) Nine Commissioners to be elected by the Corporation, of whom one should be a European, one Muhammadan, and a Marwari,

11. Copy of the letter is annexed in Appendix—V.  
File No. 83-1/34E-1934—National Archives (Progs. No. 368).  
File No. 1-E-18(3)—State Archives of Bengal.



- (c) The Inspector of Schools, Presidency Division,
- (d) Another officer of the Education Department to be nominated by the Government."<sup>12</sup>

But actually much water rolled down the Ganges before the formation of such a Committee. The Committee at last came into being at the interference of the Govt. of Bengal, but no tangible result could be expected from it, because of its very nature of formation. Ultimately it failed to make any praiseworthy and abiding influence on the future educational organisation, control and development of the second city of the Empire. This was due to obvious reasons as stated below :—

- (1) The powers of the Committee were not sufficiently and clearly defined, and there was no staff for executive work at its disposal ;
- (2) Prompt action on the decisions of the Committee were delayed very often by land acquisition proceedings and by reference to building and other Committees of the Corporation which appeared to be a very complex organisation ;
- (3) The Education Committee itself was composed of very busy men. For this reason the Committee appointed an executive sub-committee but the powers of the Sub-Committee were necessarily of a very limited character.

It seemed to be of the utmost importance that a properly constituted education authority for the city should be created at once and that upon it should be placed the responsibility of :—

- (a) "dividing the city into" school areas of suitable size,
- (b) examining the existing arrangements in each area with a view to withdrawing grant from such institutions as are incapable of doing good work, and concentrating them on the improvement and extension of such schools as would best serve public interests,
- (c) deciding how far the existing outworn system of grants and fees could be replaced by a system of schools in which the teachers were paid fixed salaries

12. File No. 1-E-18(6) 1922. Letter No. 560, dated Cal., the 18th March, 1921.



as servants of the Corporation or of the Education Authority of the city,

(d) building and equipping new schools out of public funds or such money as may be provided by public generosity,

(e) appointing and dismissing teachers,

(f) inspecting and reporting on the work of the schools, and making arrangements for their improvement,

(g) spending of and accounting for all funds, whether capital or recurring, that might be available for primary education, whether contributed by Govt., the Corporation or the generous public."<sup>13</sup>

This authority should be as small as possible and it should also have a permanent executive staff under its control.

In a resolution of the Govt. of Bengal dated the 8th Nov. 1921 it was stated that the control of primary education should be vested in a Joint Committee which should advise the Corporation in regard to the supervision and control of primary education. The resolution was to some extent defective because the Committee was intended to be purely advisory, and as such the control of primary education could not have been vested in the Committee. A draft resolution intended to correct this was sent to the Corporation with a letter dated the 4th May, 1922 by the Govt. of Bengal. The Corporation kept it for two years. It was returned as revised and approved by the Corporation with their letter, dated the 25th April 1924. In the meantime circumstances had changed. Under Act III of 1923 a new constitution had come into being for the Corporation.<sup>14</sup> Section 73 of the Act provided for the appointment of a Primary Education Standing Committee. In accordance with the provisions of section 73 the Corporation would appoint a Standing Committee. Such a Committee would consist of not more than six Councillors or Aldermen and of such other persons (not exceeding three in number) as the Corporation might associate with the Committee. The business of the Committee would be to advise the Corporation in regard to the improvement of existing schools, the

13. Paragraphs 67-68—Second Report on the expansion and improvement of primary education (1921)—E. E. Biss.

14. Calcutta Municipal Act, 1923.



provision of new schools, the appointment of necessary staff and all matters relating to the expansion and improvement of primary education in Calcutta. The Primary Education Standing Committee would be consulted in all matters relating to primary education in Calcutta, but the final decision would rest with the Corporation, subject to the sanction of Govt. wherever necessary.

The Primary Education Committee prepared a Resolution No. 1160<sup>15</sup> for the improvement and expansion of primary education in Calcutta. It was submitted to Govt. of Bengal for approval. The condition of primary education in Calcutta had long been recognised as unsatisfactory. For its improvement and expansion the Govt. of Bengal (the new Ministry of Education under the Mont-Ford Reforms) considered that the time had arrived to put the system on a proper basis and to define the position of the Govt. and of the Corporation. The draft resolution adopted by the Corporation obviously ran on lines in keeping with the aims laid down as desired by Mr. Biss in his second report. The Corporation resolution stated that the control of primary education should be transferred to the Corporation, and that the responsibility for the improvement and extension of primary education should vest in the Corporation with effect from an unmentioned date. The general policy adopted by them should be subject to the approval of the Govt. of Bengal. In other words the Corporation, advised by the Primary Education Committee would become the educational authority for Calcutta, Govt. sanction to their actions being required only "when necessary", i.e. presumably when statutorily necessary or when the power of ultimate sanction was reserved under the terms of grant of money from the Govt.

From the revised resolution as drafted by the Primary Education Committee and approved by the Corporation at their meeting held on the 26th March, 1924, it appears that the Corporation proposed to appoint inspecting officers of their own. It was obviously right and natural that the Corporation having become the controlling authority for primary education in Calcutta, should desire to employ its own ins-

15. Progs. Nos. 246-256, Dec. 1925—State Archives of Bengal.



pecting agency. In the draft resolution which was sent to the Corporation the following passages occur :—

“The educational officers will inspect the schools and send their reports to their inspectors and the latter would bring the defects found to the notice of the Chairman of the Corporation, who is the President of the Committee and who will take steps to remedy them. Should, however, the Municipality desire to have an inspecting agency of their own and approach Govt. for the services of such officers the terms will be settled by subsequent negotiation.” In the resolution as redrafted by the Corporation it was stated that the Corporation would appoint its own inspecting officers, one of whom would act as Secretary to the Primary Education Standing Committee. The sentence of the resolution as revised by the Corporation went as follows :—

“The total amount of expenditure now incurred by the Govt. of Bengal by way of grants-in-aid to primary schools in Calcutta henceforth be placed at the disposal of the Corporation for distribution.” Govt. had already promised that the annual grant made by them to primary schools would be available for the Corporation in addition to its promised contribution to capital expenditure. But before such annual grant was made the Govt. must be satisfied with the inspecting scheme of the Corporation. In fact the Govt. had a large inspecting agency of its own and thereby it exercised indirect control on the inspecting agency of the Corporation. Thus the ultimate control and supervision of primary education remained in the hands of the Government because the key of financial control was still in the hands of the Govt. Even the appointment of inspecting staff of the Corporation and their conditions of service were subject to approval of the Govt. The inspecting officers of Govt. could exercise the right of entry into all schools maintained or aided by the Corporation in order that Govt. might be placed in a position to ascertain whether its grants were properly utilised.

The question of an inspecting staff was considered further by the Corpn. in April, 1925, and it was decided that the Corporation should employ its own inspecting agency, it being understood that the Inspection Officers of the Govt. of Bengal, Education Department, would have the right to



enter and inspect all primary schools managed or aided by the Corporation of Calcutta.

Let us now consider for a while the actual progress made by the previous scheme. As per this scheme, as we have stated earlier, the total Govt. contribution amounted to Rs. 16½ lakhs to be spread over five years. In addition Govt. undertook to make over to the Corporation the amount spent by it as Grant-in-aid to primary schools in Calcutta. This was roughly Rs. 32,000/- a year. Govt. paid three lakhs as the first instalment in March, 1921. Since then Govt. have had no information as to the progress of the scheme or as to the amount which had been expended out of the three lakhs. Detailed estimates for each of the five years should have been prepared by the Corporation and submitted to Govt. for necessary action in future. In a letter No. S15, dated the 3rd April, 1923, the Corporation applied for the second instalment of three lakhs. In reply Govt. enquired as to what amount had actually been spent on the scheme out of the Govt. grant of Rs. 3 lakhs and the sum of Rs. 5,10,000/- provided by the Corporation in their budget of 1921-22. No immediate reply was sent to this letter. But it was necessary that Govt. should now enquire how the matter stood and whether the Corporation intended to prosecute the scheme, and if so, within what period. If on the other hand the Corporation desired to modify the scheme, such modification should be reported for the consideration of Govt. In the absence of such information Govt. could not make necessary provision in the budget. The promise of Govt. to pay their contribution in a period of five years was, of course, made on the assumption that the Corporation would carry out the five-year programme and complete the work within that period. The Corporation had failed to do so, and before Govt. made a further provision for contributing to the scheme they must be satisfied that the amount already contributed had already been spent on the scheme. On the 15th May, 1924 the newly formed Corporation (under the Calcutta Municipal Act, 1923) appointed a *Spécial Committee* to prepare a scheme for the extension and improvement of primary education in Calcutta including the added areas. The Committee in view of the altered conditions since the introduction of Dunn's



scheme as modified and accepted by the Govt. of Bengal recommended some urgent modifications of the earlier scheme. This was intimated to the Govt. by the Education Officer of the new Corporation in his letter No. 4942 Edn. dated Cal., the 31st March, 1926.<sup>16</sup> Mr. Dunn had formulated the previous one on a non-voluntary basis for the old city of Calcutta with 25 Wards. In accordance with the provisions of the Calcutta Municipal Act, the Suburban areas of Garden Reach, Cossipore, Chitpur and Maniktala were added to Calcutta in April, 1924. The whole of the city was then subdivided into 32 Wards. (At the outset of this Chapter we discussed at length the scheme of Mr. Dunn and the subsequent development in relation to the improvement and expansion of primary education particularly in the field of administration and finance). In the revised scheme of 1924 the special committee recommended that in the period of the next five years there should be at least—(a) 32 model primary schools for girls with accommodation for 9,600 pupils, (b) 32 improved type primary schools (known as Class-I type in Mr. Dunn's scheme) with accommodation for 6,400 pupils, (c) 128 bustee type schools with accommodation for about 14,000 pupils, and (d) one training college for teachers capable of accommodating 100 students. The requirements of the Govt. grant in Mr. Dunn's scheme as accepted by the Govt. of Bengal, were amply satisfied in the new modified scheme. The Committee anticipated that the total capital expenditure would not be appreciably different from that accepted under the old scheme. The adopted version of the syllabus of the Education Deptt. would be followed in the new scheme. The Corporation accepted whole-heartedly the above scheme in Dec. 1924 and sanctioned necessary funds for the opening of 40 to 50 schools every year. As regards the sum of Rs. 3,00,000/- paid by the Govt. of Bengal to the Corporation in March 1921 the Education Officer of the Corporation of Calcutta informed the Secretary to the Govt. of Bengal, Education Department, with regret, that it had not been possible to spend the whole amount and so far a sum of Rs. 92,000/- had been spent. It was proposed to utilise the

16. File-1-E-9 Progs. Nos. 410-414B Dec., 1926.



balance in starting a training college and a practising model school on a suitable site in Bhawani Charan Dutta Lane.

In a letter No. S6115, dated Cal., the 24th March, 1930 addressed to the Secretary to the Govt. of Bengal, Edn. Deptt., by the Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation of Calcutta (J. C. Mukherjee)<sup>17</sup> the Govt. was requested to accord sanction for the introduction of compulsory primary education for boys in Ward No. IX under section 6 of the Bengal Primary Education Act, 1919, not being less than six or more than ten years of age. Earlier the old Corpn., under section 3 of the Act had submitted returns to the Govt. as regards total number of school-going children, probable expenditure and the possible sources of revenue, the present number of children attending schools etc. for the introduction of free primary education in the city of Calcutta. Accordingly, after having the necessary permission, the Corporation set up a large number of free primary schools on voluntary basis. These were mainly financed by the Corpn. Of course occasional Govt. grants were allowed for the purpose. Education was free in these Corporation-managed primary schools. But the quality of education was far from satisfactory. There were also large numbers of primary schools aided by the Corporation. Now the question of compulsory primary education was taken up by it, and this was imperative on the part of the Corporation for rapid expansion of primary education in the city. The area of Calcutta in 1921 was 30.5 square miles and the population including added areas, according to the Census of 1921 was 1,077,284. This figure included 724,268 Males and 353,016 Females. The number of children of school-going age (6-15) was 161,593. On the 31st March, 1929 the total number of pupils in all types of schools was 106,788. Hence nearly 67% of the pupils of school-going age was receiving some kind of education in Calcutta on the 31st March, 1929. On that date, there were 14,824 boys and 9,544 girls in Corporation free primary schools. Therefore, the Corpn. was primarily responsible for the education of 24,368 pupils. The above mentioned figures reveal that nearly two-thirds of the number of children of school-going age were already at school on a voluntary basis.

17. File Edn. 3P-6(1) Progs. 15-32.



As there was huge wastage and a large number of children lapsed into illiteracy, a considerable part of the money spent on their education was, therefore, wasted. It was accordingly decided by the Corporation of Calcutta to take measures for the introduction of compulsory primary education under the Bengal Primary Education Act of 1919 throughout the city by gradual stages. To make a beginning, it was decided to introduce compulsion in one of the wards, viz. Ward No. IX of the city.

The particulars regarding the area, boundary, population, school accommodation etc. required under the Primary Education Act of 1919 were furnished. These are :—

1. *Area* : The area of the Ward was 460 acres. The school-going children were to be found in an area of about 300 acres. In this Ward, there were a large number of Moslem and Christian inhabitants.
2. *Population* : The total number of houses, including bustees, in this Ward was 15,115 and the total population was 69,670 of which 48,818 were Males and 20,852 Females (Census of 1921). Of the total population, 49,653 were Hindus, 17,900 were Muhammadans, 1,584 were Christians and 533 belonged to other communities.
3. *Schools* : (a) Corporation free Primary Schools-13 (8 for boys and 5 for girls),  
(b) Corporation Aided Schools-40 (30 for boys and 10 for girls),  
(c) High Schools with Primary Departments-10 (9 for boys and 1 for girls).
4. *Number of Children* : A detailed survey regarding the number of the pupils of school-going age as well as the educational requirements of the area was made during the months of Sept. and Oct. 1929 by the appointment of a special staff for the purpose. As a result of the survey, necessary particulars required under section 3 of the Bengal Primary Education Act of 1919 are given below :—
  - (a) (i) The number of children, not being less than six or more than eleven years of age, within the Municipal limits of Ward No. IX was 6,844 (4,057 boys and 2,787 girls);



- (ii) The number of boys, not being less than six or more than ten years of age therein, was 3,514 of whom 1,788 were already at school;
- (b) The school accommodation, staff and equipment required if suitable and adequate provision were to be made for the primary education of :—
- (i) all children referred to in clause (a)(i) likely to attend primary schools voluntarily.  
Assuming that 60 per cent of the number ordinarily attend on a voluntary basis, the number of such children was 4,157. Of these 1,207 were at Corporation schools and 1,950 at other schools. Hence the provision would be made for 1,000 children, i.e. five class I type schools with 35 teachers costing Rs. 23,160/- annually.
- (ii) all boys referred to in clause (a)(ii)—The number of boys in the Ward between the ages of 6 and 10 was 3,514. Excluding the number of boys already at school (i.e. 1,788) and allowing for the available accommodation in existing corporation free primary schools not yet filled up, provision would be required for about 1,442 pupils. Only five new Class I type schools would have to be started. The increased recurring expenditure would be Rs. 35,170/- annually.
- (c) the manner in which and the periods within which it would be possible to provide the necessary school accommodation, staff and equipment referred to in (b) under the direct management and control of the Corporation. During 1930-31 the Corporation would provide the necessary number of schools as mentioned in paragraph (b).
- (d) the Corporation used to spend an amount of Rs. 42,200/- annually for primary education in this Ward, of which Rs. 24,704/- was spent for boys and Rs. 17,496/- for girls. The expenditure to be incurred in future for compulsory education of boys is Rs. 43,920.



The Corporation did not want any assistance from the Govt. at this stage. But this must not be taken by the Govt. as an assurance that Corporation would not, in future, apply for a suitable grant if the scheme was successful and a proposal was made for the extension of compulsory primary education in other Wards of the city. To enforce compulsion, Attendance Officer was appointed.

The present expenditure was met from the Revenue Fund of the Corporation. No fees were charged nor would any cess under section 17 of the Act be levied immediately. The proposed additional expenditure would also be met from the Revenue Fund of the Corporation.

There was no need of immediate construction of buildings. The necessary accommodation for making education compulsory in Ward IX would be provided in suitable rented houses. So far as the present recurring expenses were concerned, necessary details are furnished below :—

**For Primary Education (boys and girls) in Ward No. IX.**

**(a) Corporation Free Primary Schools :**

|                             | Rs.    |
|-----------------------------|--------|
| (1) Rental                  | 8,496  |
| (2) Establishment           | 24,232 |
| (3) Contingency             | 1,680  |
| (4) Furniture and Equipment | 3,555  |

**(b) Corporation Aided Schools :**

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| (1) Grants-in-aid to primary schools                     | 2,840 |
| (2) Grants-in-aid to primary Departments of High Schools | 1,397 |

|       |        |
|-------|--------|
| Total | 42,200 |
|-------|--------|

**For Primary Education of boys only in Ward IX.**

**(a) Corporation Free Primary Schools :**

|                             | Rs.    |
|-----------------------------|--------|
| (1) Rental                  | 5,616  |
| (2) Establishment           | 13,152 |
| (3) Contingency             | 960    |
| (4) Furniture and Equipment | 2,192  |

## (b) Corporation Aided Schools :

|   |       |
|---|-------|
|   | Rs.   |
| (1) Grants-in-aid to Primary Schools                    | 2,123 |
| (2) Grants-in-aid to Primary Deptts.<br>of High Schools | Nil   |

Total ... 24,043

The scheme was sanctioned by the Govt. on 3rd Jan. 1923. The scheme was introduced on experimental basis without levying any additional tax or receiving any subsidy from the Govt. The Corporation also appointed an Attendance Officer. The scheme, which did not involve the imposition of any education cess or the receipt of any aid from provincial revenues, would begin to operate from 1934-35. The rules to be framed under section 15 of the Bengal Primary Education Act of 1919 were also framed by the Corporation and approved by the Govt. so that the scheme might be put into operation from the beginning of the Calendar year, 1935. Free education was thus possible only when the Corporation decided to go it alone. No free education was possible as long as the Corporation expected a share of the Govt. of the increased educational expenditure. The Govt. frustrated the hopes of the Corporation as its own financial position was extremely precarious. The decision of the Corporation was no doubt bold enough and it had a far-reaching impact on the later educational development in the city of Calcutta. The Corporation thus paved the way for a new educational horizon in Bengal Presidency.

**Notes :** The Chittagong Municipality also adopted a similar scheme of free and compulsory education for boys within the Municipal areas subject to 50% Govt. contribution.



## CHAPTER V

### ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL LAGS UNDER THE MONT-FORD REFORMS : THEIR IMPACT ON EDUCATION

The Bengal Primary Education Act of 1919 practically remained a dead letter due to administrative loopholes and financial stringency. Money stood as a great obstacle in the way of its full operation. This all important financial problem was a product of the constitutional reforms under the Government of India Act, 1919. The Act was passed on December 23, 1919 and came into effect on and from 1st April, 1921. The Act was operative till 31st March, 1937. The year 1937 thus marks the end of an important era. Provincial autonomy was put in full operation in that year and the dyarchical administration also came to an end.

During the 1st World War India stretched her hands of co-operation to the British Govt. in the hope of gaining more political rights. Govt. promised liberal political concessions and more democratic rights. But the hopes of India were dashed to the ground after the war was over. People were groaning under discontent. There was a widespread political unrest in the country. During the war the Govt. had not sanctioned any increase in the expenditure on education in India, although a great amount was spent in Great Britain under the same head and the Act of 1944 was passed. Congress, the then mouth-piece of the different sections of the Indian society, demanded more political concessions at an early date. The Lucknow Pact (1916) opened the eyes of the alien ruler. It intended to avoid immediate confrontation and to pacify Indian opinion by introducing some constitutional reforms. Hence the passing of the Govt. of India Act of 1919 was the inevitable result of historical consequences. But the situation in which the Reform Scheme was introduced and worked was very hard and unfavourable. In the very year 1921 in which the Reform Scheme came into operation the Indian National Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi started the non-co-operation movement.



Atmosphere of unrest prevailed almost in every nook and corner of the Indian sub-continent. As a result of the Jallianwallabag massacre there was an atmosphere of distrust everywhere with the alien Govt. Political agitation was the order of the day. It continued unabated. In 1921 the Congress demanded Swaraj by all "legitimate and peaceful" means. The Extremists in the Congress attacked vehemently the anti-Indian attitude of the British Govt. The social conditions were also extremely unfavourable due to war effects. The economic depression, however, was a global affair. The Govt. had to spend a lot to face this challenge of unsettled and uncompromising situation. The Bengal Retrenchment Committee of 1923 recommended drastic economy in the education budget. Political situation prevented the Govt. from adopting any large scheme of reorganization of education. Evidently no striking development was possible in the field of primary education.<sup>1</sup> It was checked on the one hand by the non-co-operation and Khilafat movement under the leadership of Gandhi and on the other by administrative and financial difficulties consequent on the passing of the Govt. of India Act, 1919. On the administrative side the working of the dyarchy which was the direct concomitant of the Act was far from satisfactory. Two parallel systems of administration were working simultaneously—one was really powerful but without responsibility and the other was responsible without any power. The ministers were responsible to the legislature as well as to the people at large but without any palpable authority. This was a paradox which hit hard the very basis of the Governmental machinery. On the financial side it was the Meston Award, which was regarded as a gross injustice to Bengal, completely paralysed her economic backbone. The Reformed Govt. started its career with a deficit of over Rs. 2 crores. Its actual income declined from Rs. 11,11,74,000/- in 1920-21 to Rs. 9,87,82,000/- in 1921-22.

#### **Character of the Dyarchical Govt. and its Impact on Education.**

Dyarchy was the most controversial and objectionable part of the new Reform Scheme. It has been provided by Sec. 46(1) of the Govt. of India Act, 1919. The word

1. Eighth Quinquennial Report on the progress of Education in Bengal (1927-32).



'dyarchy' is a compound of two Greek words signifying "two" and "Govts." Some people explain it as "two Govts"<sup>2</sup> in the same area. But such an explanation leads to some confusion of thought. Some may think that federal Constitutions are instances of dyarchy. But this is not true. Federal constitutions are not instances of dyarchy. By dyarchy we understand not two separate Govts. in the same area, but two independent "*executives*" within one and the same Govt. Government is in principle a unity. Dyarchy means a form of Govt. consisting of two independent executives.<sup>2</sup> Dyarchy as a constitutional measure seems to be a super-imposition and not penetration.

The experiment of dyarchy was a novel one. Apparently it marks a step towards gradual self-Govt., but in practice it was far from it. The essence of dyarchy lies in the division of the executive Govt. in the provinces into two distinct fields—(a) the Reserved, and (b) the Transferred. The subjects of administration were classified into transferred and reserved. The "transferred subjects"<sup>3</sup> were those which were administered by "the Governor who shall be guided by the advice of his Ministers, unless he sees sufficient cause to dissent from their opinion in which case he may require action to be taken otherwise than in accordance with that advice", while the "reserved subjects" were those which were administered by the Governor in Council. The partitions of the functions of the Govt. were absolutely clearcut and mutually exclusive.

Consequent on the passing of the Govt. of India Act and the adoption of the principle of dyarchy, the education of Indians generally become a "Transferred subject" with certain limitations, in charge of a Minister, appointed by the Governor from amongst the elected members of the Provincial Legislature, while the education of Anglo-Indians and Europeans was a "Reserved subject", placed in charge of a Member of the Governor's Executive Council. In Bengal, education in the "excluded areas" of Darjeeling and the Chittagong Hill Tracts was also a Reserved subject in charge of another member of the Executive Council.<sup>4</sup>

2. The Calcutta Review—1924, Vol. II, pp. 364-65.

3. A list of "Transferred subietcts" is annexed in Appendix—VI.

4. Government Resolution—No. 3346, Cal., the 20th Nov., 1923.



At this stage of our discussion some light should be focussed on some leading features of the Govt. of India Act, 1919 in relation to Provincial Administration. The Preamble to the Act declared the political goal of India. It was the gradual development of self-Govt. i.e. progressive realisation of responsible Govt. in British India. The goal had to be achieved by successive stages. With this end in view some subjects were transferred to the elected representatives of the people in the provinces. Thus a systematic delegation of powers was envisaged in the Act.

The Minister was an elected member of the Legislative Council. He was responsible to it. The Governor appointed the Minister and he held office during the Governor's pleasure.

In relation to transferred subjects, the Governor was to be guided by the advice of his ministers, but in cases of emergency the transferred subjects might be administered temporarily by the Governor (Sub Section 3 of Sec. 52 of the Act).

Section 72D deals with financial procedure and budgetary provision. The Legislative Council had power to control budget to be placed before it. The Council might assent or refuse its assent to a demand for grants or might reduce it. But the Governor in Council enjoyed special discretionary power over provincial budget as regards reserved subjects. Demands for reserved subjects could not be withheld or reduced by the Legislative Council. The Council, of course, could change or alter, or refuse demand for transferred subjects. The Governor also enjoyed emergency powers of expenditure. Some heads of expenditure were excluded from the jurisdiction of the Council. The Governor enjoyed the real control over the purse. He had the power to allocate revenue and balances of the province between the Reserved and Transferred subjects. The Provincial Legislature had no control over the purse. In respect of purse the provincial Council was almost helpless. As a matter of fact finance remained in the Reserved List of subjects.

The Reforms were carried out not by the provisions of the Act only. The Reform proposals were effected by Devo-



lution Rules framed under the Act. The subjects of administration were first divided into (a) Central and (b) Provincial Subjects. The Provincial subjects were further subdivided into (1) Reserved and (2) Transferred. The transferred Provincial subjects were set out in Schedule II to Rule 6 of the Devolution Rules.

The dyarchy as set out in the Govt. of India Act certainly failed to satisfy the Indian people. "It was too complicated to be smoothly worked. It was cumbrous, full of confusions and complexities. Governors have been the worst enemies of the dyarchy because of their extra-ordinary discretionary powers to negative the wishes of the elected representatives. The Dyarchy undoubtedly put a limitation on the scope of the activities of the ministers".<sup>5</sup>

The division of the functions and responsibility of the provincial executive Govt into Reserved and Transferred made it very much weak. There was lack of unity and solidarity in the executive branch of the Govt. There was no harmony between the two sets of executives—the Reserved and the Transferred and again between the whole of the Executive and the Legislature. The official and nominated members in the Council always supported the executive policy. The ministers had no solid party behind them. The reformed Legislative Council also could not work properly due to the policy of continuous obstructions by the Swarajists—a branch of the non-co-operators after their entry into the legislature. The policy of the Swarajists with a band of more than 60 members in their camp in a house of 140 was to wreck the transitional constitution and thereby to force the Govt. to concede their demand for Home Rule or Swaraj.

The position of the Governor was one of great responsibility and difficulty. He was the balancing factor between divergent policies and different ideals. He should apparently have sympathy for the popular side of his Govt. Success of the transferred subjects depended to a great extent on the impartiality and proper guidance to the ministers. There should be complete understanding between the Ministers and

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5. Note by Sir Bijoy Chand Mahtab Bahadur of Burdwan to the Reforms Enquiry Committee of 1924.



the officers under the Governor as the ministers represented popular wish and the Council represented administrative experience. The relation between the Reserved and Transferred halves of the Govt. should be harmonious and advantageous. The two sets of executive Govt. should co-operate with each other for successful working of the dyarchy.<sup>6</sup> The Ministers who gave evidence before the Reforms Enquiry Committee condemned dyarchy unequivocally as a failure. "Dyarchy must go as it failed to produce any good results. So far education was concerned we were there as we were before the Reforms. The nominated Indian Ministers directing the transferred departments were 'Semi-responsible'. It has meant limited responsibility with unlimited scope for obstructions, and that is an impossible basis of Govt.'"

The ministers had no freedom or power to impose taxation to augment revenue for the purpose of education. They were helpless creatures in the Governor's Executive Council who could dismiss them even at a time when they commanded confidence in the legislature. The people wanted radical educational reforms including free and compulsory elementary education. The ministers with their best intentions could not respond to the popular demand because their hands were tied. There was thus little possibility of educational development though the subject was transferred to elected Indian Ministers.

Education became a transferred subject under the Reforms Scheme as stated earlier. It was handed over to Indian Ministers nominated from the enlarged legislative council having popular representatives based on a narrow franchise. Sanitation, medical relief were also in the transferred list (Appendix VIII). The reserved subjects included police, finance, justice etc. The method of division of funds between the transferred and reserved subjects took away all the benefits of the reforms. The order in which provincial funds were to be distributed was : first, the contribution towards the expense of the Imperial Government ; next, the amount

6. Report from the Joint Select Committee of the Parliament on the Govt. of India Bill, 1919.

7. Post-war Reforms and Education—An article written by V. V. OAK in the *Modern Review*, Vol. 36, pp. 249-50.



needed for the reserved subjects, and finally the need of the transferred subjects. The transferred subjects which were public welfare services and which were subject to constant expansion were provided for the last. Naturally, the deficit if any, would be charged to the transferred subjects and the odium of additional taxation over the already over-burdened poor people would be shifted to the Indian ministers in charge of transferred subjects. Over and above, the Provincial Legislative Council had only limited power of taxation.

The budget was to be framed by the executive Government as a whole. The Ministers had an opportunity to take part in the deliberations. But owing to their minority strength they could not do anything in the matter. The budget was then placed before the provincial council for discussion and for taking votes upon resolutions for allotments. "But neither in this case nor in the case of the Govt. of India does the legislature acquire power under the Reforms to vote upon and pass or reject the budget."<sup>8</sup> The Executive Govt. was not bound to carry out the wishes of the legislature except in the case of transferred subjects. The Governor enjoyed power to insist on the whole or part of the allotment in the budget originally placed in the council. He had the power of certification of a bill to be placed before the Council. The final say was thus in the hands of the executive Govt.

The Finance Department was a huge anomaly. Under the Devolution Rules made under the Act, it was a Reserved subject ; and yet a Transferred Department had as much interest in it as a Reserved Department. On all schemes of Development the Finance Department would have naturally to identify itself with the Reserved subjects. Much could, of course, be done by a system of joint deliberation but it was not provided for in the Act.

The Indian National Congress in its different sessions vehemently criticized the efficiency and effectiveness of the Mont-Ford Reforms as embodied in the Govt. of India Act. Special Session of the Bombay Congress of 1918 characterised the Mont-Ford proposals as disappointing and unsatisfactory.

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8. Sixty years of Indian Finance—K. T. Shaha.



It demanded the establishment of fully responsible Govt. within a definite time limit and ministerial responsibility only to the legislature. The Muslim League also joined hands with the Congress in its demand for complete responsible Govt.<sup>9</sup>

The Resolution of the Amritsar Session, 1919 of the National Congress also demanded full responsible Govt. as the Reforms Act was inadequate, unsatisfactory and disappointing. The Act was not a guarantee and a clear declaration of elementary rights of people. Reserved powers of the executive Govt. were regarded as enormous. It demanded the establishment of Swarajya and adopted the programme of non-violent non-co-operation.

Mr. C. R. Das in 1921 in his undelivered presidential address of the National Congress clearly indicated the real character of the dyarchy and the position of the ministers in respect of Reserved and Transferred subjects. In respect of the former the Governor and the members of his council were to take decision, but in relation to the latter the Governor was required to take advice of his ministers. The Statute made no provision whatever for the joint deliberation of the Governor and his council and his ministers sitting together, except in regard to proposals for taxation and borrowing. "The ministers are not part of the Govt. as regards the reserved subjects. As regards the position of the ministers in relation to transferred subjects, it is a mistake to suppose that any 'subject' has been transferred to the ministers. Only certain departments have been transferred, but they have been transferred subject to the encumbrances created by a century of bureaucratic rule, and the ministers have no power whatever to discharge those encumbrances."<sup>10</sup>

The worthlessness and ineffectiveness of the dyarchy was under fire in the Presidential Address of S. Srinivasa. Aiyangar, Gauhati, 1926. "The Ministers are always under official tutelage and domination so that they can not breathe the oxygen of freedom. Joint deliberations between the mem-

9. Resolution of the Special Session of the Bombay Congress, 1918.

10. Undelivered Presidential Address of Mr. C. R. Das in 1921.



bers of the Council and the ministers were always in the interest of the reserved half. Even most matters relating to transferred subjects required to be considered by the reserved departments. Overwhelming importance was thus attached to the reserved subjects. Again the rules relating to financial restrictions and the control exercised by the Finance Member as one in charge of a reserved subject over important aspects of transferred subjects, make the power of the ministers as unreal as that of puppets.

(2) The division of subjects between the reserved and the transferred halves is such that the pith and marrow of a Govt. are with the former.

(3) As regards the conflict between the two halves of the Govt., the Governor is made in effect a constitutional dictator of the province.

(4) The power of the Governor on his sole authority to make laws relating to a reserved subject contrary to the decision of the Legislative Council furnishes a capital instance where the legislature possesses less power than the executive. One man can make laws quite as valid as the laws made by a Legislature. Thus the Reform Act has in reserved departments set up an irresponsible autocracy.

(5) In respect of transferred subjects there is no responsible Govt. Each Legislative Council has a solid block of nominated and official members to support the views and policy of the alien bureaucracy to defeat the purpose of the elected ministers. The ministers cannot but depend on the support of the Governor and the executive Council. The very composition of the Legislative Council deprives it of any real representative character and its elected members of any adequate power.

(6) The Governor's power to appoint ministers is a substantial power of patronage by which a nobody or anybody can be made a 'benami' leader to carry out the Governor's policy.

(7) The Legislative Council has no control over the non-votable items of expenditure. These non-votable items amount to a higher percentage of the expenditure relating to each transferred subject.

(8) The Ministers have little or no control over the members of Civil Services serving in departments dealing with



transferred subjects. The Governor has exclusive jurisdiction over these services.

(9) The Governor is empowered to over-rule the Minister's decision on questions relating to a transferred subject and direct him to act otherwise.

(10) The Governor has an emergency power—the emergency to be determined by himself—to authorise expenditure notwithstanding a vote of the legislative council in respect of transferred subjects.

(11) The Governor has power to stop legislation in respect of transferred subjects notwithstanding the opinion of the Legislative Council.

(12) The Governor can return a bill relating to a transferred subject to the Council for reconsideration with his recommendations which are in effect obligatory.

(13) When a Governor can not through his Ministry manage a Council to his satisfaction, he can himself administer the transferred subjects as happened in Bengal in 1924-25 (temporary suspension of dyarchy).

(14) A minister can hold office during the Governor's pleasure against the opinion of the Council.

(15) The Governor is entitled to disallow any motion to discuss a definite matter of urgent public importance even when it relates to a transferred subject.

(16) The allocation of the revenues for the administration of transferred subjects depends primarily on the reserved half and on the Governor and not on the Legislative Council."<sup>11</sup>

**Report of the Reforms Enquiry Committee, 1924 with Regard to the working of the Dyarchical System :**

The Reforms Enquiry Committee under the Chairmanship of Sir Alexander Muddiman was appointed in 1924 (i) "to enquire into the difficulties arising from, or defects inherent in, the working of the Govt. of India Act and the Rules thereunder in regard to the Central Govt. and the Govts of Governor's provinces; and (ii) to investigate the feasibility and desirability of securing remedies for such difficulties or defects, consistent with the structure, policy and purpose of

11. The Presidential Address of S. Srinivasa Aiyangar, Gauhati,—1926.



the act." The Committee was divided in their opinions and as such two separate reports were submitted.

The majority report<sup>12</sup> made the following specific allegations against the working and efficacy of the dyarchical hybrid. It revealed the inherent defects, anomalies and inconsistencies of the constitutional machinery in the provinces particularly in Bengal.

- (1) the absence of joint deliberation between the two halves of the Govt.;
- (2) the absence of joint responsibility of the ministers. The ministers were dealt with by their Governors individually and not collectively;
- (3) the impinging of the administration of reserved upon that of the transferred subjects and vice versa ;
- (4) the failure on the part of the permanent officials to co-operate with the Ministers;
- (5) the vesting of the control of the Finance Department in a member of the reserved side of the Govt., the control thus given to the reserved side over the Ministers and, generally, speaking, the handicapping of the other departments by excessive financial control; and
- (6) the failure of the constitution to vest real authority in the Ministers owing to the control of :—
  - (a) the Governor ; and (b) the Government of India and the Secretary of State.

The Minority Report<sup>13</sup> was no less vocal and critical in revealing the inherent defects of the constitution and the failure of the dyarchy as an effective system of administration. The defects are as follows :—

- (1) the theoretical and inherent defects of the constitution have now been clearly shown by actual experience;
- (2) the Ministers' position has not been one of real responsibility;

12. The Majority Report was submitted by Sir Alexander P. Muddiman, MD. Safi. B. C. Mahatab. Burdwan. A. H. Froom. H. M. Smith.

13. The Minority Report was submitted by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru., Sir Sivaswamy Iyer, Mr. M. A. Jinnah and Dr. R. P. Paranjpye.

- (3) while in a few provinces the practice of effective joint deliberation between the two halves of the Govt. has been followed, in several of them it has not been;
- (4) excepting to a partial extent in Madras, almost everywhere else the Ministers have been dealt with individually by Governors and not on the footing of collective responsibility ;
- (5) the close inter-connection between the subjects of administration which have been divided into "reserved" and "transferred" made it extremely difficult for Legislatures at times to make in practice a distinction between the two sections of the Govt. with the result that the policy and administration of the Reserved half of the Govt. have not infrequently been patent factors in determining the attitude of the Legislatures towards the Ministers ;
- (6) the Meston Award has crippled the resources of the provinces. It has been the corner stone of the entire financial system, and it has prevented Ministers from developing nation-building departments including education to the extent which would have enabled them to produce any substantial results ;
- (7) the defects of the Rules and the constitution and the working of the Finance Department have put a severe strain on the system.

There are thus enough evidence to show that the dyarchy failed. "It is admitted on all hands that the dyarchy has failed. Dyarchy has failed absolutely. The only remedy is complete provincial autonomy."<sup>14</sup> The dyarchy was doomed. It worked creakily. "It was a constant demand by all that the dyarchy should go and the Govt. in future should consist of Ministers only."<sup>15</sup> It was unsatisfactory and unworkable and could not fulfil the expectations of the different classes of the Indian people. So far Bengal is concerned the system proved to be miserable. "Dyarchy is unpopular beyond dispute. Full responsible Govt. can only placate the people.

14. K. V. Raddy, Minister in Madras remarked in his letter dated the 6th August, 1924.

15. The Report of the Reforms Enquiry Committee, Chap. VII.



Such a demand is being voiced from all platforms—Moderates, Liberals, Swarajists or Congressmen.”<sup>16</sup>

Complete dyarchy was not in fact established. For complete dyarchy it would have necessary to have established a complete vertical divisions of functions between the two halves of a Provincial Govt. and to have endowed each half with a separate purse, with a separate permanent staff and with a separate Legislature. The partial dyarchy which was introduced is clearly a complex, confused system having no logical basis rooted in compromise and defensible only as a transitional expedient. It was a statutory hypocrisy. The conception of dyarchy was ab initio void.

The Simon Commission (1927) clearly pointed out some of the causes of the failure of the dyarchical constitution in the following way : (a) absence of the working of the principle of joint ministerial responsibility in the provinces ; (b) unwillingness of the Governors to take the Indian ministry into their confidence in the disposal of serious and grave administrative issues ; (c) absence of joint deliberation between the two halves of the Govt. ; (d) absence of the principle of harmonious working between the ministry and the members of the Executive Council ; (e) dependence of the ministry on votes of the official and nominated members.

“People were dissatisfied with the Reform scheme from the very beginning for various reasons :—

1. The Scheme was a dictation ab initio. It was a command and did not reflect the wishes of the people. It was imposed on the Indians against their wishes.
2. The greatest flaw and objectionable element of the Reform Scheme was the Dyarchy. In its very nature it was self-contradictory, fatal to good Govt. It created a dangerous deadlock. It was an arrangement by which some matters conducted with the Govt. were “transferred” or committed (under severe limitations) to Indian managements, while others were ‘reserved’ or kept wholly under British control. Exactly described, it was a plan which put side by side

16. P. C. Dutta, Minister in Assam in his letter dated 19th May, 1924.



two radically different, two absolutely antagonistic forms of Govt.—one, self-rule the other arbitrary rule from outside. It was an attempt to mix oil and water; or to ride two horses going in opposite directions. Abraham Lincoln said: 'A nation cannot endure half free and half slave'. Neither can a nation be successfully ruled by means of Governmental machinery, half-formed for ends of freedom and half for ends of oppression. That is exactly what the Reform scheme was. It was a childish, impossible, misshapen, mongrel plan.

3. It contained no "Bill of Rights", no constitutional guarantee of any kind securing the Indian people against possible future injustice and tyranny on the part of the Govt. Without a bill of rights, or a constitutional guarantee of justice, the people had no sure protection, they were wholly at the mercy of a foreign rule inflicted upon them. It protected the British rulers of the land, but nobody else. It did not guarantee to the Indian people police protection, or military protection, or civil protection.
- (4) It gave to the Indian people no effective voice whatever in Legislation. All real law-making power was retained absolutely in British hands. This was true also of legislation in the provinces.
- (5) The new scheme of Govt. was vitiated by the fact that its whole spirit was one of negation. Its constant aim, from first to last, was to forbid, to forbid.
- (6) The Governmental scheme for India fixed no time. It left everything uncertain. Whatever promises it made or was supposed to make, of new rights and privileges, were only to be fulfilled "some time", in an unknown future, and at the option of the British ruler."<sup>17</sup>

This was the real character of the Reforms Scheme at the alter of which every educational reform had to sacrifice itself. Without efficient functioning of the Reform scheme success of any attempt at educational advancement could not be ex-

17. The Modern Review, Vol.—38, pp. 109-110—Comments made by Dr. Sunderland, J. I.



pected. The hopeless failure of the dyarchy had its sure repercussion on the question of the expansion of education which was the crying need of the day. Educational extension and reform must inevitably play an important role in political progress of the country. Education was posed as a test for political reforms by the alien rulers. On August 20, 1917 the Imperial Govt. declared in the Parliament a "gradual realisation of responsible Govt. through successive stages" as the political goal of India. Hence an experiment was conducted by the Act of 1919 by transferring some subjects to Indian control including education. For successful functioning of the Reforms Scheme spread of mass education was regarded essential. Extension of franchise is meaningless without the extension of mass literacy. But progress of education was interrupted by the uneven and uncertain distribution of financial resources due to the constitutional reforms introduced by the Act of 1919. This showed the self contradictory policies of the Government.

Expansion of primary education was one of the pressing political and social needs of the moment. On it depended the success of responsible Govt. and all that success implied in the way of national progress. But the condition of primary education was deplorable because of the war-time and post-war economic distress. The increase in the number of institutions and pupils was not even proportionate to the increase of population.

"So long as the Reserved Departments do not come under the control of Indians, and our countrymen are not appointed to high posts, instead of Europeans, money will not be forthcoming. But money must be secured at all costs. Finance, under the Mont-Ford Reforms, was in the Reserved list. The Ministers are not to blame for their inability to get necessary funds. In this respect Govt. have done them a great injustice."<sup>18</sup>

"Mass education was absolutely needed for successful working of the new constitution. Education was regarded as a test for offering Swaraj to the Indians. Education, under the Reformed Scheme was a transferred subject and we have observed the fate of the transferred subjects under the new

18. The Bengali (Cal) of the 30th July, 1921.



constitution. The Govt. in its transferred departments has done negligible in the matter of education. In 1912 His Imperial Majesty expressed a wish to see a net-work of schools and colleges throughout the length and breadth of India. But we get a very disappointing account of how far this wish of His Majesty has been fulfilled. The Education Minister is anxious to make primary education free and compulsory. But this plea on the part of the Government which are liberally increasing the pay of all classes of officers will not so easily be accepted by the people."<sup>19</sup>

The "Bande Mataram" (Cal.) of the 5th May, 1924 severely criticised the real attitude of the alien bureaucracy. "It is not their intention to spread mass education and thereby to keep the masses illiterate and not to make them fit for Swaraj. For this reason the system continues the same as it was before the Reforms. The foreign masters have merely transferred the responsibility from their own shoulders to our shoulders in order to prove that we are unfit for any rights. Our masters know perfectly well that the transfer of the control over any department like education, while keeping the key in their own hands, can not be productive of any effect."<sup>20</sup>

"The high hopes created by the inauguration of the Reforms were not fulfilled in the province. But practically the whole period 1921-1937 was one of extreme difficulty for Bengal on account of an almost chronic state of financial difficulties with the exceptions of 1924-25 and 1925-26. The Meston Award on the inauguration of the Reforms hit the province very hard and a Retrenchment Committee under the Chairmanship of Sir R. N. Mukherjee had to be appointed in 1922. It recommended drastic cuts in educational expenditure. All were not accepted by the Government. Large measures of economy in educational expenditure had to be introduced. Year after year Bengal Presidency faced deficit budget particularly in the field of education, whereas other provinces were gradually increasing their expenditure on the same head."<sup>21</sup>

19. The Swaraj (Cal.) of the 28th Oct., 1921.

20. The Bande Mataram (Cal.) of the 5th May, 1924.

21. The Ninth Quinquennial Report—1932-37, Chap.—I.



"In the year 1921-22 in which the Reforms were introduced Bengal faced a deficit Budget of Rs. 2.08 crores. Her receipts were estimated at Rs. 10.81 crores, while the expenditure was calculated to Rs. 12.89. During the year 1922-23, Government was compelled to curtail expenditure and still there was comparatively small deficit of Rs. 26 lakhs. Of course there was some improvement in the following year. During the year 1924-25 there was actually a surplus budget of Rs. 35 lakhs. The next financial year witnessed a surplus of Rs. 44 lakhs. But the budget for the year 1926-27 was a deficit one (Rs. 20 lakhs). The year 1927-28 ended with a small deficit of Rs. 4 lakhs. The next financial year ended with some surplus but this tendency was checked by the worldwide economic depression in 1929-30 in which year there was a deficit of Rs. 62 lakhs and this became a permanent feature for the subsequent years in the budget of the Bengal Presidency.

The continuous deficit budget definitely gave a death blow to the education of the masses. The condition of education became deplorable. There was least opportunity of its improvement quantitatively as well as qualitatively. "Smaller sums have been spent on education in Bengal, from Govt. sources, during the period when the reformed constitution was at work. At the end of the Reforms all political parties held Govt. responsible for the deplorable condition of primary education. They attached highest importance to educational reconstruction of the province particularly mass education. No civilized nation can curtail its budget on mass education." "In 1926-27 we find that Bengal spends the smallest percentage on primary education, that the contribution by public bodies to the total primary expenditure is lowest in this province, that the expenditure per head of the population is lowest, the expenditure per school is the smallest, the average fee the highest. The annual average expenditure per scholar is just under Rs. 4. The average annual expense per school is Rs. 153. The average annual fee per head is about Rs. 1-8."<sup>22</sup> The salary of a primary school teacher in private school was Rs. 5, in Panchayati Union School was Rs. 10/- and in Government School was Rs. 15/-.

22. The Eighth Quinquennial Report—1927-32 Chap. III.



The Government was always pleading its inability to increase its educational budget on account of financial stringency while it was constantly increasing its budget on reserved subjects like police administration, paying fat salaries to the Civil Services. In the Bengal Budget (1924-25) police expenditure loomed large: It was Rs. 1,84,00,000. It was by far the biggest item. Police expenditure exceeded the total educational expenditure by more than Rs. 60 lakhs. In spite of financial stringency Rs. 2,20,70,000/- was provided in the 1932-33 Bengal Budget for the Police. This was the highest allotment, the General Administration came next (Rs. 1,18,79,000/-).

The Government's excuse was thus absolutely vague, untenable and motivated. The local bodies with their slender and inelastic income were increasing their educational expenditure. The Government was collecting taxes on the plea of education although they did not spend sufficient money for the education of the people. In no other province in India was voluntary contribution so great as in Bengal. Only 1% of the Budget was earmarked for education and out of the total educational expenditure only 17% was spent on primary education. The imperialist Govt. actually did not like the spread of education which meant no gain but all loss for them. Spread of education, to them, was nothing but spread of liberty. Lord Macaulay had once observed that they would not like to make the same mistake in India which they had committed in America.

The acute financial situation was more aggravated by the frequent changes in the personnel of the Ministry and for nearly a year no stable ministry could be formed. During 1924-25 there was no ministry of education. Education as a transferred subject was suspended and it was under the charge of a member of the Governor's Executive Council. During the whole period 1921-1937 the education Ministry was unstable.

The authors of the Montagu-Chemsford report had urged the importance of a complete separation between the finance of the Central Govt. in India and those of the various Provincial Govts. It had outlined separate budgets and separate sources of revenue for the provinces. To this end the report pro-



posed (Ch. VIII) that the central exchequer should receive the whole of the Income-tax and the revenue from general stamps, salt, opium, railways etc. and that of the provinces should retain the entire receipts from land revenue, irrigation, excise and judicial stamps etc. The provinces were given limited powers of taxation and borrowing. Inasmuch as by this arrangement the Govt. of India would lose heavily, the scheme, however, proposed to compensate them by contributions from the provinces; and the power to levy such contributions was given in section 1(2) of the Government of India Act, 1919.

Since the commencement of British Rule in India Bengal has been unfairly treated in respect of financial resources. As the financial adjustments with the provinces under the Mont-Ford scheme of Reforms were based on the actual expenditures of the provinces in the closing years of the war and not on actual revenues, this action proved to be disastrous to Bengal. The Bengal Govt. had no authority to impose taxes without previous sanction of the Central Government which was the controlling authority. The Provincial Government could not borrow independently. Public Loan Market was only meant for the Central Government. The provinces had no free hand in expenditure. The Bengal Government protested to the Meston Committee against the financial arrangements proposed in the Mont-Ford Report as extremely unfair and urged that more adequate resources should be placed at the disposal of the province.

#### **FINANCIAL SET-UP UNDER THE MESTON SETTLEMENT :**

As a disparity was deep-rooted in the economic position of the provinces and as searching criticism was levelled against the exemplar figures given in the Mont-Ford Report, the Govt. of India pressed for an earlier treatment of the matter and urged that steps be taken as soon as possible to fix a standard and equitable scale of contribution from the provinces and as such they proposed the appointment of a committee on Financial Relations to advise on the subject. Hence the Committee was appointed by the Secretary of State under the Chairmanship of Lord Meston (the other members of the Committee were Mr. Charles Roberts and Mr. E. Hilton Young) with the following terms of reference :—



- (a) the contributions to be paid by the various provinces to the Central Government for the financial year 1921-22 ;
- (b) the modifications to be made in the provincial contributions thereafter with a view to their equitable distribution until there ceases to be an all-India deficit ;
- (c) the future financing of the provincial loan accounts.

The Committee started its enquiry on 5th February, 1920 and submitted its report on 31st March, 1920. The Committee recommended almost in the same way in which the Mont-Ford Report proposed. The Joint Select Committee of both the Houses of Parliament and the Secretary of State approved the Report with some minor modifications such as revenues from general stamps and a portion of the income-tax proceeds should be handed over to the provinces.

The Committee calculated the initial deficit of the Central Govt. to Rs. 9 crores 83 lakhs in the year 1921-22 (Dev. Rule-17). In the Mont-Ford Report (para 206) the deficit had been estimated at Rs. 13.63 crores. The initial contributions of the provinces to be made to the Central Exchequer were calculated at the following ratios :

Madras—35½%, Bombay—5½%, United Provinces—24½%  
 Punjab—18%, Bengal—6½%, Assam—1½%, Central Provinces—2%.

Contributions to be made in such a way as to leave each province with a reasonable working surplus and without the necessity of fresh taxation. To establish equity between the provinces it was felt necessary that the total contributions of each province to the purpuse of the Govt. of India should be proportionate to its capacity to contribute. Unfortunately this principle was not followed in respect of Bengal. She was most inequitably treated in respect of contributions to the Central treasury. As the Committee regarded the initial contributions as inequitable it proposed fixed ratios of standard contributions to the Central deficit in the following way :—



STANDARD CONTRIBUTIONS<sup>23</sup>

| Province          | Percent contribution to deficit in the 7th year |                 |
|-------------------|---|-----------------|
| Madras            | ...   | 17              |
| Bombay            | ...   | 13              |
| Bengal            | ...   | 19              |
| United Provinces  | ...   | 18              |
| Punjab            | ...   | 9               |
| Burma             | ...   | 6½              |
| Bihar and Orissa  | ...   | 10              |
| Central Provinces | ...   | 5               |
| Assam             | ...   | 2½              |
|                   |   | <hr/> 100 <hr/> |

The contributions and the divisions of revenues was effected under Dev. Rules and Section 45A (3)(2)(ii) of the Govt. of India Act, 1919. The Central Govt. could levy special contributions in the event of crisis (Dev. Rule 19). Contribution was made the first charge on the provincial revenues under Dev. Rule 20. Under 72/D3(i) of the Govt. of India Act no vote was required in the Legislative Council for such contributions. Both the Central Govt. and the Joint Select Govt. of India would consist of its direct contributions from the provinces to the Central Govt. should cease at the earliest opportunity, but no time limit was indicated.

The total contributions of a province to the purse of the Govt. of India would consist of its direct contributions through the channels of customs, income-tax, duties on salt etc.

The prospective financial resources and liabilities under the new scheme of administration of (i) the Govt. of Bengal, (ii) the Municipalities of Bengal, (iii) the District Boards of Bengal, (iv) the Union Committees of Bengal were summed up in a Note<sup>24</sup> written by Mr. K. Bhattacharya for the annual conference of the economists in 1919 in Madras. Under the new reform scheme the Central and Provincial sources of

23. The Report of the Financial Relations Committee—  
Chap. IV. para—17.

24. "Post-Reform Public Finance in India"—K. Bhattacharya.

revenue were completely separated. Under the Reformed scheme the Bengal Govt. would have to lose revenues under customs particularly on export duty on jute, the share of the income tax and proceeds from general stamps. In return she was entitled to full revenues from land, irrigation, Excise and Judicial stamps. But land revenue was inelastic due to Permanent Settlement. She would have to contribute 87% of the differences between its gross revenues and gross expenditure to the Central exchequer as a first charge on its revenues. She was allowed to levy fresh taxes for Provincial purposes, provided the taxes do not trench on the Imperial field. She was also allowed to borrow in cases of need through the Imperial Government.

On the liabilities' side she would have to spend on famine relief, irrigation, industrial growth, agriculture, Local Self-Govt., education and public health etc.

(Bengal had a population next to that of the United Provinces alone, but her revenues were smaller than those of Bombay, Madras, the United Provinces and Punjab).

On the basis of the new financial arrangements under the Reforms the real gain of Bengal was only about eightyone lakhs, but her expenditure increased by thirtyone lakhs. Thus her net saving was calculated barely to Rs. 50 lakhs. Out of this she would have to pay to the Indian Govt. 87 per cent or  $43\frac{1}{2}$  lakhs and begin her new career with the paltry increase of  $6\frac{1}{2}$  lakhs. Another increase of  $6\frac{1}{2}$  lakhs would make up an inauspicious 13. But she was destined to spend more on "Reserved Subjects" particularly on Police administration, Irrigation and Famine Prevention. In the absence of adequate funds the "Transferred Subjects" like Education, Sanitation, Medical Relief, Public Works Agriculture, Industries, Local Self-Govt. and Co-operation might be starved.

The mofassil Municipalities of Bengal at the beginning of the Reforms had an annual income of about Rs. 58½ lakhs, but their total expenditure was Rs. 66 lakhs. Again their total debt amounted to Rs. 43 lakhs. Hence their total deficit was about Rs. 50 lakhs. Deficit budget was their regular phenomenon. The deficit was met by loans from the Bengal Govt. Thus instead of giving relief to the Bengal Govt. the Municipalities added liabilities to it. Unless rates and taxes



were increased, the mofassil Municipalities were not in a position to discharge their functions properly, as the Bengal Govt. could not with its limited and inelastic income indefinitely increase its grants to them.

The Calcutta Municipality had an income of nearly 1½ crores and it was not dependent upon Govt. assistance. But this august body used to spend less than Rs. 1 lakh on education and declared its inability to finance primary education within its own areas without substantial Govt. help, recurring and non-recurring.

The total revenues from all sources of the District Boards were Rs 110 lakhs at the beginning of the Reform Scheme. The Provincial Govt. was not in a position to increase its annual grants to them. The Imperial Govt., of course, might continue its contribution of 25% of the cess. The District Boards would have to meet the heaviest expenditure; and their main source, provincial rates, was both inelastic and fluctuating.

There were 174 Union Committees in Bengal with an aggregate income of Rs. 2 lakhs of which nearly Rs. 1,13,000/- was contributed by the District Boards. To be successful as a self-governing body, a Union Committee must have much greater income than the then average of Rs. 1,150/- for fuller spread of village Self-Govt. The District Boards with their existing limited income, could do nothing more to help them, nor to spread their growth.

The Bengal Govt. could not on the one hand with its limited and inelastic income increase its grants to Municipalities, while, on the other hand, it could not materially increase its grants to District Boards, for practically it would have no scope for increasing its own revenues. Then, clearly all expansion depended on the capacity and willingness of local bodies to raise additional money.

As a result of the Meston Award there was complete separation of Indian and Provincial heads of revenue. The most elastic sources of revenue such as customs, income tax had been left in the hands of the Govt. of India, and the less and comparatively unexpanding, unyielding sources of income had been made over to the provinces. The allocation of revenue was objectionable and highly prejudicial to the in-



terest of the provinces to which they protested strongly. The land revenue as mentioned earlier was very much inelastic, whereas the income tax had a remarkable capacity of expansion and it was the only direct contribution to the public revenue. The method of allocation of revenues was thus regarded as offensive to the interests of local Governments.

The rate of contribution from Bengal was disproportionate, inequitable, unjust and fatal. The Meston Committee foresaw "unlimited potentialities" of revenue in Bengal. But it did not consider the taxable capacity of the province. It only considered agricultural and industrial wealth of the province and did not take into account other incidents of economic position.

The Meston Award was to compensate the deficit of the Govt. of India which was calculated in 1921-22 to be Rs. 9 crores and Rs. 83 lakhs of which the Govt. of Bengal alone was required to pay Rs. 63 lakhs initially. The standard contribution as determined by the Meston Settlement from the Bengal revenue was the highest. It was 19% of the total deficit in the 7th year. Bengal was the highest revenue yielding province and as such she was treated most shabily and partially by the Meston Committee. As a result of its short-sighted award Bengal suffered most. As most of the sources of revenue were taken away, she was left to a condition of bankruptcy and perennial insolvency. One can not expect golden eggs from a starving duck.

The Meston Settlement was void ab-initio inasmuch as it was based on ill calculations, wrong informations and data, and inevitably the conclusions drawn by it were incorrect and far from truth. It sealed the fate of Bengal financially and educationally. It paved the way for constant flow of revenue from Bengal Presidency. She was treated by the British as a colony of the Govt. of India and even to-day in free India the tradition still goes on unabated as we shall see later.

There was constant demand for the revision of the Meston Award both at official and non-official levels. In introducing the Bengal Budget the Hon'ble Mr. J. Donald referred to it as "the inequitable Meston Settlement, against which we have always protested." In his reply to the address of the Mahajan Sabha the Governor of Bengal said : "There is, I



think, general agreement that Bengal has cause for complaint of the financial settlement arrived at under what is known as the Meston Award....Practical working has shown that for the proper administration of this Industrial province some share of the revenues now allotted to Central finance from Bengal Presidency must be allocated to the Province."<sup>25</sup>

Britain extended her empire in India with the revenues of Bengal. Bengal financed the Central Govt. to a much larger extent than any other province of India. Speaking at the dinner of the Mining and Geological Institute on the 18th Jan., 1929, His Excellency the Governor of Bengal said : "Something like 45 per cent of the total revenue of the Central Govt. comes through Bengal, and at the same time she finds herself with scarcely any money to run her own administration."<sup>26</sup> The Govt. of Bengal criticised the Meston Committee's Settlement of financial resources because all special grants from Imperial to provincial revenues would cease. Under the Meston arrangement Bengal would receive a very minimum surplus in comparison to other provinces.

The Bengal Legislative Council adopted a number of Resolutions condemning the financial arrangements recommended by the Meston Committee on the ground that they were inequitable to Bengal, having been based on "an exaggerated and indefinite idea about the further taxable capacity of Bengal, and being likely to jeopardise the successful working of the Reforms in the Province."<sup>27</sup> In moving one such non-official resolution Mr. Surendra Nath Banerjee who became a Minister in the Govt. of Bengal pointed out that the indirect contribution of Bengal to the Central Exchequer was the largest of the provinces. Bengal even paid the highest (19%) in direct contribution. Bengal's contribution as "jute export duty" was the highest in India. It was Rs. 2 crores 30 lakhs in 1919-1920 and in 1929-1930 Rs. 3 crores 75 lakhs. Jute was the only commodity on which export duty was paid. Bombay paid nothing though revenue from raw-cotton amounting to Rs. 40 crores. Not a single pice

25. The Modern Review, Aug. 1927—pp. 179-86—An Article written by Sri Ramananda Chatterjee.

26. The Modern Review, 1929, Vol. 43.

27. Bengal Legislative Council Proceedings, 1st July, 1920. Vol. III.



was levied on different items of export except jute. This is enough evidence to show how Bengal was treated unjustly by the Meston Settlement. Moreover Bengal paid more on import duty on foreign liquors, cloth, sugar, tobacco etc. So far as the cost of administration of Bengal was concerned, she spent proportionately to her population much less than any other province. Mr. Banerjee further pointed out that the adoption of the Meston Settlement would be the initiation of fresh taxation. He, therefore, urged that the export duty on jute be made over to Bengal and that the ordinary income tax be provincialised—a view supported by all the public bodies in the province. The Indian Association of Calcutta, the Bengal Chambers of Commerce, the British Indian Association, the National Liberal League all joined hands in protesting against the inequitable financial arrangement of the Meston Settlement.<sup>28</sup>

Under the Mont-Ford Reforms Bengal had to pay Rs. 20 crores out of a total income of Rs. 27½ crores to the Imperial Govt. while Madras paid 11½ crores out of 20 crores, Bombay 19½ crores out of Rs. 30 crores, the United Provinces paid Rs. 5<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> crores out of 13<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> crores; and under the re-adjustment proposed in the Meston Report the same inequality of contribution was maintained. The Committee concluded that on the basis of the existing expenditure Bengal would gain Rs. 40 lakhs—but only Calcutta University demanded Rs. 40 lakhs for the implementation of the Calcutta University Act. The whole question of Primary education had to be otherwise dealt with in Bengal, as in this respect she was far behind the other provinces.

The Report of Meston Committee was biased and unfair so far as Bengal was concerned. "The Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms and the Meston Committee Report both proceeded on the assumption that as in Bengal the land is permanently settled Bengal has under no circumstances any right to complain as regards her contribution to the Central treasury." The vision of the Committee on Financial relations was absolutely distorted and clouded.<sup>29</sup>

28. Provincial Finance in India—Dr. P. N. Banerjee, 1929—Calcutta University Publication.

29. Bengal Legislative Council Proceedings, 1920, Vol. LII.



As a result of the Meston Award there was no uniform progress in the nation-building departments in the provinces particularly on education. The expenditure on education increased between the years 1920-21 and 1928-29 by the following amounts :—

Madras—Rs. 128 lakhs; Punjab—Rs. 87 lakhs; United Provinces—Rs. 78 lakhs; Bombay—Rs. 56 lakhs; Bengal—Rs. 35 lakhs.

Thus there was no adequate funds for the development of education and as such introduction of universal compulsory primary education was delayed.

In the distribution of resources among the different provinces the inequality was rampant and glaring. This is evident from the budget estimates for 1929-30. The revenues of the different provinces for the year are given below (in crores) :

Madras—Rs. 18.07; Bombay—14.41; United Provinces—13.07; Punjab—12.54; Bengal—Rs. 11.11; Bihar & Orissa—Rs. 6.19.<sup>30</sup>

Thus Bengal was left with a very scanty and meagre source of revenue inasmuch as the major revenue yielding sources i.e. export duty on jute and a reasonable share from the revenues from Income tax were taken away from her.

As regards the Jute export duty, it was the unanimous opinion of the delegates from India to the Round Table Conference that Bengal had a legitimate claim to the whole of the proceeds of this duty;<sup>31</sup> and the proceeds from the duty on jute should be handed over to Bengal. From 1916 to 1935 Bengal had contributed by means of this export duty nearly Rs. 70 crores to the Central Exchequer, while the Govt. of Bengal had not been able to derive any benefit from this monopoly product of the province. The export duty on Bengal Jute which was one of the most localised industries of the world should have been made a provincial source of revenue. It was discriminatory to allocate the export duty on jute to the Central Exchequer. The fact is also worthy of consideration that the cultivation of jute adversely affected

30. The Calcutta Review—Vol. 39, pp. 10-30, 1931—An Article by Dr. P. N. Banerjee published in this Vol. of the Journal.

31. Proceedings of the Federal Structure Committee and Minorities Committee—Appendix IX, Vol. II.



the sanitation of the province and the Govt. of Bengal required to spend large amounts on maintaining public health. It was argued that the burden of the duty fell on the foreign purchaser, yet the claim of the province to a piece of good fortune could not be brushed aside. Jute, both as an agricultural product and as a manufactured article solely belonged to Bengal. Equity demanded, therefore, that a substantial portion of the proceeds of the jute duty should belong to the province. It was further argued that "it is a geographical accident that has made Bengal the home of the jute and other industries,"<sup>32</sup> and as such Bengal could not claim the entire proceeds. But there were other export articles which were not levied at all. Again Great Britain by virtue of her sheer geographical position became the greatest maritime and commercial power in the 19th century, and for that reason she should not be robbed of her commercial fortunes. Taxation Enquiry Committee in para 150 in its report demanded that a portion of the export duty should fall on the producer. The Fiscal Commission in its report (page 100) claimed that "some portion, if not the whole, falls on the home producer". "The proceeds of the jute export duty should be handed over to Bengal."<sup>33</sup>

Again it was argued that Bengal could not complain of her inelastic income as it was due to the permanent settlement. But in reply it can be said that to permanent settlement neither the Govt. of Bengal nor the people of Bengal were a party. The settlement was purely a bilateral transaction between the Zamindars of Bengal and the Govt. of India, and it was in their mutual benefit.

Towards the end of the dyarchy the annual proceeds from jute duty was Rs. 3.75 crores. Meston Award legalised the plunder of this huge amount from Bengal.

Now, let us consider the question of Income Tax :—

A substantial percentage of the income tax, the most profitable and expanding source of revenue, and super tax proceeds derived from the province should also have been made over to Bengal. Both Bengal and Bombay vehemently

32. This was the opinion of Meston quoted in *Modern Review*. 1924, Vol. 35. p. 385.

33. *The Statesman*, 21st July. 1926.



protested against the Meston Settlement by which the whole amount from the income tax was credited to the Central Govt. Of the total revenue collected from taxes on income in the various provinces in 1934-35, amounting to Rs. 17.58 crores, Rs. 4.33 crores were derived from Bengal, Rs. 1.64 crores from Madras, Rs. 1.33 crores from the United Provinces and Rs. 0.92 crores from the Punjab. The amount of taxes on income collected from Bengal during the period 1921-22 to 1935-36 was about Rs. 65 crores. The bulk of this sum (roughly about 90 per cent) could justly be claimed as the contribution of Bengal to the Central Exchequer. It is quite natural, therefore, that Bengal should have a claim to a substantial portion of the proceeds of the income tax derived from the province. The Peel Committee very justly recommended that taxes on income should be transferred to the provinces with the exception of the Corporation tax. It also proposed the extinction of provincial contribution by annual stages over a definite period, such as 10 or 15 years. It was argued that as the whole of the Income tax revenue collected in Bengal and Bombay was not really paid by their inhabitants, they had no claim to it. But a portion of the income tax collected in these provinces was paid by private individuals and certainly this portion of the income tax should be claimed by Bengal and Bombay. The income of the British Govt. was not entirely paid by the inhabitants of Great Britain, the bulk of its contribution was paid by the component parts of her empire throughout the world. These parts of the empire could definitely claim over their contributions. But actually this did not happen, such was the argument :

From the foregoing discussion one factor is quite clear that finance has had a very important bearing on the working of the constitution. The question of finance was in the forefront of the difficulties or defects inherent in the constitutional reforms. The reforms were put into operation at a time when economic conditions were bad, when the whole world generally was suffering from depleted finances. The basis on which the financial relations between the Central and Provincial Govts. rested was vitiated by the large fall in the exchange value of the rupee, the revenues of the provinces generally suffered from economic causes, and as a rule the



Provincial Govts. found themselves faced with deficit budgets. The allocation of revenues to the various provincial Govts. was decided in the light of the recommendations contained in the report of the Financial Relations Committee commonly known as the Meston Committee. This separation of the provincial finances, as we have mentioned earlier, from the finances of the Central Govt. were effected by the Dev. Rules under the Govt. of India Act, 1919. The basis of the conclusions arrived at by the Meston Committee was fundamentally wrong. This seriously affected the allocation of resources of the provinces particularly Bengal Presidency and as a result they have not been vested with the resources which should have been given to them. In Bengal, the Meston Settlement was regarded as the main defect in the constitution. It was perhaps the main cause to which much of the discontent against the Reforms was attributed. Even the more moderate personnel criticised the settlement as inequitable and unjust so far as Bengal was concerned. The arrangement in regard to the division of the sources of revenue into Central and Provincial and the so-called standard rate of contribution was highly unsatisfactory in the Bengal Presidency, the largest populous province in the country next to the United Provinces. The Settlement hit the financial back-bone of the Province hard. The total amounts collected in Bengal during the period 1921-28 were Rs. 37 crores but she received only Rs. 0.95 crore for the same period. All along Bengal had been compelled to contribute to the Central Govt. a much larger portion of the revenues collected here than any other province, and too little was left for her teeming population.

Bengal's claim for financial justice remained unheeded. Beginning with the first reform budget of 1921-22 which estimated a deficit of Rs. 2.08 crores, she had never been able during the whole period of dyarchical constitution to free herself from the crippling legacy of the Meston Settlement. On the one hand, the Govt. had been compelled to provide for the most drastic retrenchment, specially in the field of the nation-building services including education, and on the other, new taxation of a large amount had to be levied. The acute economic depression in 1930 caused large



deficits year after year. Sir Walter Layton in submitting his report on Indian Finance to the Simon Commission pointed out that increases in the nation-building services such as Education, Medical Relief and Public Health, between 1922-23 and 1929-30 had been the least in Bengal as compared to other major provinces. The expenditure on education in Bengal had practically come down to the 1922-23 level, being 1,23,16,000 rupees for 1922-23 and 1,27,67,000 rupees in 1933-34. The expenditure on primary education in 1933-34 was actually below the figure of 1922-23, being Rs. 30,11,000 in that year as against Rs. 30,28,000 in 1922-1923.<sup>34</sup> "The blame is sought to be laid at the door of the Meston Settlement. The latter no doubt has inflicted terrible financial injustice on Bengal, but it is absurd to suggest that the lack of initiative which Bengal has shown in respect of educational reform was entirely due to the Meston Award. It is true that the Meston Award has rather severely restricted the financial resources of Bengal Govt.....But as a matter of fact, the Govt. of Bengal does not spend on education even proportionately to its income as compared with some other provinces. As regards the expenditure on primary education, the record of Bengal is too bad indeed. In this respect she lags behind other provinces. The Govt. of Bengal has done least of all."<sup>35</sup> "The Govt. of Bengal set apart a larger balance than before, for police and other reserved departments. This was unfair. The public of Bengal with their scanty resources increased their contributions, whereas the custodians of public funds decreased theirs. There was a persistent cry in the country for more money, for education."<sup>36</sup> "During the last decade and a half when the Mont-Ford Reforms have been in action there has been hardly any real improvement in this province in respect of literacy. This single fact proves that the so-called reforms were an unmitigated failure at least in this province."<sup>37</sup>

The Meston Settlement thus rendered impossible, by persistent financial difficulties, any expansion in the construc-

34. Resolution No. 2517, Education. Govt. of Bengal, published in Calcutta Gazette. Aug., 1, 1935.

35. The Mussalman (Cal.) of the 23rd Aug. 1935.

36. The Sanjivani (Cal.) of the 10th July, 1919.

37. The Mussalman (Cal.) of the 23rd Aug. 1935.



tive services. The Budget estimates for 1934-35 provided for a deficit of about 21½ crores, an amount nearly equal to the total budget provision (251½ lakhs) for the departments of Education, Medical Relief and Public Health. The settlement was thus arbitrary and unsound.

Bengal's position was fifth in the order of allocation of revenues. The following figures will make the position clear:—

| Provinces       | Total net revenue in Rupees (1934-35) |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------|
| Madras          | Rs. 15,62,63,545                      |
| Bombay          | Rs. 14,28,86,110                      |
| United Province | Rs. 11,30,10,066                      |
| Punjab          | Rs. 10,66,57,685                      |
| Bengal          | Rs. 9,43,03,201 <sup>38</sup>         |

Bengal being the most populous province in the country (next only to U. P.) was allowed the least sum of money for all of her administrative and other purposes. This is evident from the following table:—

| Province        | Population (1921 Census) | Budgeted Income (1927-28) |
|-----------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| Madras          | 4,23,13,985              | Rs. 16,54,80,000          |
| Bombay          | 1,93,48,210              | Rs. 15,08,00,000          |
| United Province | 4,53,75,787              | Rs. 12,94,50,000          |
| Punjab          | 2,06,85,024              | Rs. 11,13,00,000          |
| Bengal          | 4,66,95,536              | Rs. 10,73,39,000          |

In 1924-25 the expenditure on education from different sources was as follows:—

| Province        | From Govt. Funds | From Fees      |
|-----------------|------------------|----------------|
| Madras          | Rs. 1,71,38,548  | Rs. 84,32,991  |
| Bombay          | Rs. 1,84,47,165  | Rs. 60,13,969  |
| United Province | Rs. 1,72,28,490  | Rs. 42,14,354  |
| Punjab          | Rs. 1,18,34,364  | Rs. 52,87,444  |
| Bengal          | Rs. 1,33,82,962  | Rs. 146,36,126 |

38. An Article entitled "Bengal's case for a financial readjustment" by Dr. P. N. Banerjee published in Modern Review—1936, Vol.—59, pp. (408-411).



Bengal was thus the only province which paid for its education more in fees than it received from the Govt. But Bengal in the same year was the highest revenue-yielding province in India next to Bombay as the Statistical Abstract indicates :

| Province        |     |     | Revenue collected              |
|-----------------|-----|-----|--------------------------------|
| Madras          | ... | ... | Rs. 20,15,96,063               |
| United Province | ... | ... | Rs. 13,34,69,835               |
| Punjab          | ... | ... | Rs. 14,04,07,097               |
| Bombay          | ... | ... | Rs. 20,75,42,689               |
| Bengal          | ... | ... | Rs. 20,58,99,197 <sup>39</sup> |

With the introduction of the Reforms, the Central as well as the Provincial Govts faced acute financial crisis in the shape of deficit budgets. There was a total deficit of more than 68½ crores of rupees during the first three years of the Reform-Constitution. The Reforms were started when there were not in fact sufficient funds to provide for the needs of both the Central and the Local Govts. The Local Govts held that the difficulty arising from finance had formed one of the main obstacles to the success of the Reforms.<sup>40</sup>

Taxation had to be resorted to for securing equilibrium between revenue and expenditure, retrenchment was necessary for the same purpose, and the Ministers, charged with the responsibility of administering the transferred departments found themselves without funds for development or progress in the nation-building activities. This difficulty was largely inevitable and was to a great extent due to world conditions after the war. Giving every allowance to financial world conditions the hasty and admittedly incorrect conclusions arrived at by the Meston Committee were largely responsible for the difficulties in the working of the dyarchical constitution in the provinces. As a consequence, criticism of the expenditure on the reserved side as pronounced, and comparisons between expenditure on transferred and on

39. An article entitled "Unequal treatment of the provinces under the Reforms" written by Sri Ramananda Chatterjee and published in the *Modern Review*, Aug., 1927, pp. 179-86.

40. The Report of the Reforms Enquiry Committee (Alexander Muddiman Committee), 1924.

reserved subjects were prominent. In Bengal the division of expenditure between the reserved and transferred halves had been as follows :—

| Year | Reserved subjects | Transferred Subjects |
|------|-------------------|----------------------|
|      |                   | subjects             |
| 1921 | 70%               | 30%                  |
| 1922 | 66%               | 34%                  |
| 1923 | 66%               | 34%                  |

It was a common cry that the transferred departments were being starved. The Finance Department was a reserved one (Rule 36). It occupied a peculiar position in the dyarchical system of Govt. It demonstrated the difficulties and defects of the system and its many anomalies and imperfections. It was not a department common to the whole and was independent of either half of the Govt. Ministers were not eligible for the office of the Finance Member, who was the head of the Department. The Finance Member must be a member of the Executive Council. The Ministers could not but accept the advice and guidance of the Finance Department though they were not constitutionally bound to do so. In practice the Ministers could not reject the advice of the Finance Deptt. because such rejection meant refusal by the Finance Department to release the needed funds. The only course then left to the ministers was to appeal to the Governor. In regard to the differences between the two halves of the Govt. arising over financial matters, the position of the Governor was extremely delicate and embarrassing. He was ultimately responsible to Parliament through the Govt. of India and the Secretary of State for the administration of the reserved subjects, of which finance formed part under the rules. The only remedy suggested was the adoption of the system of a separate purse. But this was perhaps not the real solution. The correct view was the replacement of the dyarchical system by responsible Government.

41. Report of the Bengal Govt. on the working of the Reformed constitution of 1919 (1923)—para 3; letter No. 7508-A dt. 21st July, 1923 from the Secy. to the Govt. of Bengal to the Secy., the Govt. of India, Home Department.



There was another serious complaint against the Finance Department which came into being under the Devolution Rules. The Finance Membr was also in charge of some spending departments. Naturally there was an unconscious desire on his part to promote the interests of the reserved departments at the expense of the nation-building departments such as education under the control of the Ministers. As a result, in many provinces Ministers felt that their departments were starved.<sup>42</sup> It was no wonder then that when under the reformed system the popular Ministers were unable, through lack of money, to produce and carry out schemes of development in education, public health and the like, the system had been condemned in many quarters. No heed was paid to the fact that these conditions prevailed generally throughout the globe, and that elsewhere progress was also at a standstill. Taxation was agreed to in the hope that money might be available for transferred subjects but the disappointment that ensued only accentuated the feeling, and rendered the antagonism more acute. This was particularly the case in Bengal whose treatment by the Meston Settlement stood condemned from the outset, and to this more than to any other cause perhaps might be attributed much of the discontent against the system that prevailed. This settlement was one of the main defects in the dyarchical constitution. It was the Achilles hill in the body politic. The Devolution Rules under the Govt. of India Act 1919, tried to create financial autonomy of the provinces but the autonomy was not real, as it imposed restrictions and limitations on the provinces in respect of finance, borrowing, expenditure and taxation. An attempt should have been made to distribute the burden between the different provinces and the Govt. of India on just and equitable lines for the successful working of the constitution.<sup>43</sup>

Augmentation of the resources of the provinces was very urgently needed, and for this purpose a re-adjustment of the finances of the country was an imperative necessity. The

42. Report of the Reforms Enquiry Committee, 1924.

43. Reports of the Local Govts on the working of the Reformed Constitution, 1924—Letter No. 8540.D, dated Cal., the 21st July, 1924 from the Chief Secretary to the Govt. of Bengal to the Secretary, the Govt. of India, Home Department.

most essential need of the country was the development of the nation-building services. While large sums of money had been spent annually on the Army and the Police, niggardly treatment had always been meted out to the nation-building services. These services being under the control of the Provincial Governments it was necessary to set them firmly on their feet by placing adequate resources at their disposal. Three things could be done in this regard—retrenchment, reallocation of resources and fresh taxation. The last one was inconceivable, unrealistic and impossible as the people were already over-taxed. A proper re-adjustment of financial relations between the Central Government and the Provinces and also a complete change in the system of financial administration was highly needed. Retrenchment should have been effected in the Central budget, and the funds thus released should have been placed at the disposal of the provinces for the development of subjects like education, public health, medical relief, agriculture etc.



## BISS' SCHEME—A SEARCH FOR ADMINISTRATIVE AGENCY AND PROVISION FOR FINANCIAL RESOURCE

The Bengal Primary Education Act of 1919 provided for the extension of primary education in Municipalities (including the Calcutta Municipality) and in certain other areas in Bengal. For the present it was proposed to proceed on a voluntary basis and that compulsory education should be introduced when proper provision was made for the above purpose. In accordance with section 3 of the Act, the Government of Bengal called for certain statements (Returns) showing the present provision of primary education in detail from the Municipalities through the Divisional Commissioners.

The returns† received by the Government disclosed that most of the municipalities were unwilling to contribute anything substantive towards the expenses for providing primary education under the Primary Education Act of 1919. It was proposed to review the whole situation with reference to the condition and resources of each municipality as well as the extent to which it was prepared to bear the cost for providing a complete system of primary education, before determining the amount of any grant which Government might sanction, and if necessary, to authorise the levy of an education cess to cover the expenditure.

In the meantime on 3rd Aug. 1920, (Letter No. 505T-Edn), Mr. E. E. Biss, an Education Officer,†† was placed on

Notes : † 27 Municipalities did not submit returns. Of the 88 that did reply three (Santipur, Pabna and Asansol) did not offer complete constructive proposals regarding finance. The statements submitted by most of the remaining Municipalities were in need of careful revision and restatement.

†† Mr. E. E. Biss had a wide experience of the problems of primary education for over five years before coming to India. When Principal of the Dacca Training College he watched experiments in Primary education for over two years in Dacca. He acted as Assistant Director of Public Instruction for Muhammadan Education, and had clear understanding of the peculiar requirements of the Muslim community. He possessed also considerable administrative experience as a member of the Indian Educational Service.



special duty by the Govt. of Bengal, with instructions to scrutinise the returns received from Municipalities under Sec. 3 of the Bengal Primary Education Act of 1919, to make a careful survey of the conditions of primary education both in municipal and rural areas, to formulate a definite and detailed scheme for expansion throughout the Bengal Presidency which might extend over 10 years and submit for the consideration of the Government. Instructions were also given that the Report should indicate the new expenditure and how much of this : (1) should be borne by the ordinary income of the local bodies, (2) what assistance would be required from, and (3) what amount should be raised by the imposition of an education cess. Out of 115 Municipalities and 25 District Board areas in 5 Divisions schemes were drawn for typical Municipalities and to consult district board authorities at the headquarters of each district for want of time. The question of primary education in Calcutta was omitted from the scope of Mr. Biss' enquiry as was also that of the primary education of girls.

The returns received under sec. 3 of the Primary Education Act of 1919 were not dependable due to the following reasons :

- (1) they were incomplete,
- (2) all calculations of the numbers of children were of a most doubtful kind,
- (3) the Municipal Commissioners were doubtful about the probable number of children who might attend school "voluntarily" on a free basis, or on the existing fee basis,
- (4) most of the constructive proposals were merely based on paper and not on actual needs of the Municipalities,
- (5) there was no system of individual birth registration.

So Mr. Biss collected fresh data from departmental officers, local officers and Municipal authorities for his enquiry. He visited 583 schools and consulted a large number of parents and teachers. Mr. Biss and his staff prepared detailed schemes for 23 Union Board Areas. It was expected that under the Village Self-Govt. Act of 1919 and by the end of March, 1921 the number of Union Boards would be between 6,000 and 7,000 throughout the Presidency. The



aim of the Report was the making of provision for all boys of age six to ten who were likely to attend school voluntarily if primary education was made free. Mr. Biss strongly advocated giving the opportunity of free primary education to all (before it was made compulsory) at the earliest possible time. The report recommended revolutionary changes in the system of education which would equip the rising generation to live their lives.

Mr. Biss gave a very sorry and pathetic picture of the then condition of primary education in the whole of the Bengal Presidency. He provided a long list of causes of such wretched condition. Extension and improvement of primary education was a great social problem. The people were really poor for purposes of any educational taxation. To keep the boys without education was the order of the day. The material conditions of most of the Pathshalas and Makhtabs were beyond description. Teachers were ill-paid and without professional fitness. The quality of teaching was most unsatisfactory and deplorable. Expenditure per scholar in Bengal was the lowest in the country. In 1918-19 it was Rs. 3.5 in Bengal, Rs. 5.3 in Madras and Rs. 12.9 in Bombay. Whereas the private contribution towards mass education was the highest, in 1918-19 the total expenditure on primary schools in Bengal from public sources was 32.8%, in Madras it was 73.5% and in Bombay 86.4%. Thus the cost of education from provincial revenues was very low in Bengal in comparison with Madras and Bombay.<sup>1</sup> Government contribution covered less than 50 percent of the total educational expenditure. Entire educational system lacked sound administrative policy, and a definite, satisfactory and solid financial basis. Inadequate funds always created hurdle in the way of expansion and improvement of elementary education. The control was beyond the efficient functioning of an educational system. Inspection was infrequent and far from satisfactory. All these factors combined led to rampant wastage and stagnation. The inevitable result was mass illiteracy. The percentage of literacy, i.e. 4% was the lowest in comparison not only with this subcontinent but also with the whole world. But mass literacy was an imperative necessity

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1. Biss—First Report on Primary Education in Bengal—Chap. II.



to face the rest of the world on equal terms. Bengal is a part of the globe. It must face successfully the world situation and challenge of the different nations. This was not possible if the masses remained ignorant. The attainment of literacy was only the first step towards progress—social, economic and political. For success of popular Govt. mass literacy was a must. The popular vote must be made an intelligent one. Mr. Biss obviously recommended and pleaded for total overhauling and reorganisation of the whole system in the light of certain definite principles :<sup>2</sup>

**(a) Proper Distribution of Schools :**

“The schools at present cluster and compete where teachers can secure fees, other areas being left unprovided. In the new system each Municipal or Union area is to be mapped out, the parts that are uninhabited owing to the existence of water, cultivation, jungle or other causes, being shaded in the map and then left out of account. The populated areas are then to be covered with circles of half a mile radius, a publicly managed school being placed at the centre of each such school area. The result would be that each household would have a good permanent school within half a mile in the direct line, and there would be no competition between schools in the same locality. All the funds that can be made available in the locality are to be concentrated in the recognised school which is to be developed to the highest point possible within the limits of the elementary system.”

**(b) Concentration of Children :**

“Within each half mile ‘school area’ will be found a certain number of boys of primary school age. When the time comes for compulsion to be enforced these will all have to enter the school, but in the meantime they will form a rough guide as to the size of the school building. If 400 boys are found within the circle it will be safe to arrange for the accommodation of 300. The schools being truly national, children of all classes and creeds will be able to attend them, provision being made in parallel sections of classes for the

2. Biss—Second Report on Primary Education in Bengal—Chap. I, pp. 1 & 2.

**Notes**—Mr. Biss submitted two reports, first in 1921 and second in 1922.



special needs of each community. The larger the schools up to a limit of 300 boys, the greater will be the economy and efficiency with which they can be conducted."<sup>3</sup>

(c) **Popularization :**

"The schools are to provide the teaching that is needed and desired by the people of the locality. For instance, Muhammadan boys will be taught their prayers and the Holy Koran, while the Hindu boys receive instruction in their great classics such as the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. In the same way, wherever possible, some elementary English will be taught if the people desire it."

(d) **Co-ordination :**

"As the schools become established on these lines they will take part in a public primary school examination which is much desired by the people. (The pros and cons of this question are set out in the First Report, in paragraphs 65-69, Chap.—III pp. 23-24). Through this examination they will be linked with schools for giving more advanced instruction—(i) on the cultural, and (ii) on the vocational sides. These higher schools will be organised in a way that will best serve the largest possible population, and so as to give the best boys every chance of developing their powers to the full for the benefit of their people." Mr. Biss recommended the making of primary education free and compulsory everywhere and at once, but that progress involved four stages:—

- (i) the present plan of private enterprise in which the schools are assisted by grants and largely supported by fees ;
- (ii) a system of public control (Municipal, District Board or Union Board) in which the teachers being paid fixed salaries, and fees charged ;
- (iii) a system of public control, the schools being free and voluntary and the teachers being paid from public funds ;
- (vi) a system of public control, the schools being free and attendance at them compulsory for all boys of primary school age.<sup>4</sup>

3. Mr. Biss—1st Report—Chap. III pages 28-29.

4. Mr. Biss—1st Report—Chap. III, pp. 21-22.



The state should use its best endeavours to destroy ignorance and to create efficiency among its people and the spread of literacy was essential. The attainment of literacy by all involved the setting up of a public system of at least primary schools. But poverty might stand in the way. The schools must, therefore, be free. The will to attend might still be lacking. In that case compulsion must be resorted to, for it had become a "necessary precaution of prudent statesmanship." The "intention of making primary education free and compulsory as soon as possible be accepted as a directive idea." But this could not be made effective till parents could be assured of the existence of a suitable and efficient free school within a mile of their abode. The establishment of a national system of education could not be successful without the co-operation of every citizen. Compulsion could be effected through the appointment of "attendance officers".

Mr. Biss recommended that the public system of elementary education might be divided into (a) Lower Primary, leading to one class of Upper Primary Standard, and (b) Middle Classes. The total number of classes should be five in all. Lower primary of two classes would be followed by one class of Upper Primary and two classes of Middle Standard. All schools should be truly vernacular. English should be taught as an important special subject.

At the completion of Class II, i.e. Lower Primary there would be a final examination. This would be a qualifying examination for admission into Upper Primary or Middle classes. The unanimous demand of the country was the restoration of such an examination.

No system of education, however good, can yield good and satisfactory results unless it is assured of an easy supply of trained and efficient teachers in sufficient numbers. But "the remuneration of teachers in primary schools is deplorably low, lower in many cases than that of a day labourer. Teachers are compelled to earn outside as much as they can. Government Primary School teachers are paid only Rs. 8 per month, but private school teachers are paid not more than Rs. 3 or Rs. 4 a month. The remuneration of teachers is of first importance. Thus improvement of schools is not possible without improving the pay of the teachers. Many teachers



even draw less pay than the menial servants of the same school. The children of the country are being committed to the care of men who have not enough to eat and to clothe. This state of things must be improved to attract better teachers in primary schools and better men are to be found for the training schools.”<sup>5</sup>

The teachers also must augment their professional efficiency having suitable training for the purpose. “Teachers in primary schools are trained in Guru-Training Schools. Owing to the financial stringency caused by the war the proposed improved-type Guru-Training school has not made as much progress as it otherwise would have done. The existing policy is to put one improved type Guru-Training school in each sub-division. There are 79 subdivisions in Bengal.”<sup>6</sup> The total number of Guru-Training schools in 1918-19 was 117, with 1,956 students, of which 954 became qualified in that year. If the new scheme of putting one school in each sub-division ( $79 \times 40 = 3,160$ ) is implemented 3160 would be in training”.

**Capital cost of the existing Scheme :—**

79 Guru-Training schools at Rs. 50,000 = Rs. 39,50,000  
 Minus 22 already built ( $22 \times 50,000 = 11,00,000$ ) = Total Rs. 28,50,000. The recurring cost of the existing scheme, if applied to all 79 subdivisions, would be  $79 \times \text{Rs. } 200 \times 12 = \text{Rs. } 1,89,600$ . The Gurus were now in receipt of stipends amounting to Rs. 11 per month. The cost of the full scheme under this head would, therefore, be  $79 \times 40 \times \text{Rs. } 11 \times 12 = \text{Rs. } 4,17,120$  per annum. This would give a grand total of recurring cost at (Rs. 1,89,600 plus Rs. 4,17,120) = Rs. 6,06,720. In 1918-19 the maintenance charges of the existing schools cost Govt. Rs. 2,10,873. The estimates were approximate in regard to the training of teachers in rural areas. But the estimates in regard to Municipalities

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5. Mr. Biss—First Report on Primary Education in Bengal—Chap. VI.
  6. Letter No. 294, dated Calcutta, the 31st March, 1915 addressed by Mr. W. W. Hornell, D.P.I., Bengal, to the Secretary to the Bengal Govt., General Deptt. The letter is annexed in Appendix ‘J’ of the First Report of Mr. Biss. The letter contains the proposals of the D.P.I. for the establishment of improved type Guru-Training Schools.



were exact. Mr. Biss proposed a new scheme for training of primary school teachers in lieu of the existing one. In the new scheme it was proposed to train  $(150 \times 25)$  (25 institutions accommodating 150 students each) = 3,750 teachers as against  $79 \times 40$  = 3,160 or 590 more in the existing scheme. The proposed scheme was no doubt, slightly more expensive, each student costing Rs. 64 a year, as against 60 in the existing scheme. But the capital cost of the proposed scheme was less than the existing one. The capital cost of the proposed scheme was calculated at Rs. 16,20,000 (Rs. 64,800  $\times$  25). This was Rs. 12,30,000 less than an estimate for the existing scheme completed for all subdivisions in the province. Thus there would be a substantial saving on capital account if the new scheme was adopted. The question of finance was all important. This was perhaps the greatest hurdle in the way of implementing any scheme of expansion and improvement of elementary education.

Regarding educational finance in Bengal Mr. Biss made the following observations :—

- (a) "that the existing expenditure on primary education, low though it is in India as a whole, is deplorably low in Bengal as compared with other provinces. The average annual cost of educating a boy is Rs. 3.5 in Bengal as against Rs. 12.9 in Bombay,"
- (b) "that the people of Bengal are paying directly and voluntarily more than those in other provinces, for the fee rate in Bengal is the highest, averaging Rs. 1-11-0 per annum, no other province, except Bihar and Orissa, coming up even nearly to one half of that",
- (c) "that the expenditure from public sources in Bengal is small, and the proportion from provincial sources is very small when compared with that in other provinces; if the cost of educating the boy, which is met from provincial resources, is distributed over the whole population, it averages .029 (rupees) per head in Bengal and .265 (rupees) in Bombay",
- (d) "that Bengal is very far behind Madras and Bombay in the direct part taken by Govt. and local bodies in



providing schools for the people. The percentages of public institutions are<sup>7</sup> :

|        |       |
|--------|-------|
| Bengal | 6.9%  |
| Madras | 26.9% |
| Bombay | 80.7% |

Bengal has much leeway to make up in organising a national system of schools, and if efficient free education is to be provided, there will have to be a considerable increase of money expended by Govt. or by local bodies or by both. The proportion of expenditure to be borne as between the Govt. and the local bodies should be a half and half".

Mr. M. P. West as we have stated in the Prelude in his "Surevy of Primary Education in Bengal" had put forward two schemes for the capital and recurring cost of making complete provision for primary education.

The following table summarises Mr. West's estimates even excluding the cost of inspection, scholarships and repairs :

|                      |   | Scheme I<br>Capital | Scheme II       |
|----------------------|---|---------------------|-----------------|
| District Board areas | — | Rs. 3,12,36,661     | Rs. 1,42,55,275 |
| Municipalities       | — | Rs. 17,07,671       | Rs. 9,87,958    |
| Total                | — | Rs. 3,29,44,332     | Rs. 1,52,43,233 |
|                      |   | Recurring           |                 |
| District Board areas | — | Rs. 1,90,18,284     | Rs. 1,04,77,645 |
| Municipalities       | — | Rs. 9,17,709        | Rs. 5,03,596    |
| Total                | — | Rs. 1,99,35,993     | Rs. 1,09,81,241 |

The average salary proposed for teachers by Mr. West was Rs. 15 in the Scheme I and Rs. 8 in the Scheme II per month. The view of Mr. Biss was that the minimum wage a month in towns should be Rs. 15 with a chance of rising to Rs. 30, and Rs. 12 with free board and lodge in rural areas with a chance of rising to Rs. 24 or more. The salaries proposed were not too high, and hence the cost should be

7. Mr. Biss—First Report on Primary Education in Bengal—p. 58.

faced through a good deal of economy to be effected by system and organisation.<sup>8</sup>

#### The cost of the Proposed System :

There were 115 Municipalities in Bengal. It was not possible for Mr. Biss and his staff to visit all the Municipalities. He made calculations for the complete provision of primary education in 35 Municipalities initially, and on the basis of those he made the final calculations for all the Municipalities. In order to implement the proposed scheme, the 35 Municipalities would have to provide Rs. 3,34,165 on the more expensive plan, and Rs. 2,48,635 on the less expensive, including capital and recurring costs. Mr. Biss calculated that in order to make complete provision for primary education in all the Municipalities on a free basis the total annual recurring expenditure would be Rs. 10,73,501. The capital cost of the complete scheme for all the municipalities would amount to Rs. 28,66,205.

There were about 7,220 village Unions in Bengal. It was again not possible to draw detailed schemes for all the Unions by the special officer and his small staff. Nevertheless 204 Unions were worked out and certain conclusions were drawn regarding the cost of providing the whole of Bengal with primary education. The average cost of a Union organisation was calculated to about Rs. 2,000 capital and Rs. 2,300 recurring. Hence the total cost for all the village Unions in Bengal would be :—

Capital (Rs. 2,000  $\times$  7,220) = 1,44,40,000 and

Rs. 1,66,06,000 recurring (Rs. 2,300  $\times$  7,220) cost.

Mr. Biss thus calculated that the total cost of the scheme to make complete provision for primary education in Municipal (excluding Calcutta) and non-Municipal areas of Bengal on a free basis would be Rs. 1,73,06,205 (Rs. 28,66,205 plus Rs. 1,44,40,000) capital and Rs. 1,76,79,501 (Rs. 10,73,501 plus Rs. 1,66,06,000) per annum recurring.<sup>9</sup> Hence if Calcutta were included the ultimate cost of primary education for the whole of Bengal Presidency would be roughly 2 crores

8. Mr. Biss—First Report on Primary Education in Bengal—Chap. IX.

9. Mr. Biss—Second Report (1922) on Primary Education in Bengal—Chap. IV.



of rupees (Rs. 2,00,00,000) non-recurring and 2 crores per annum recurring. "These are no doubt terrifying figures. Bengal must get on with the business in hand with the resources that are available without giving too much heed to the expense involved in a complete scheme, and so overcome the difficulties step by step. England also started the work for free primary education for all in this way and completed it within 28 years."<sup>10</sup>

Mr. Biss proposed the imposition of education cess to meet this huge expenditure. "The amount of cess does not stand in the way of adoption of the scheme. Under section 4 of the Bengal Primary Education Act of 1919, Govt. can direct the commissioners to provide the necessary school accommodation, staff and equipment for all children, not being less than six or more than eleven years of age, likely to attend primary schools voluntarily within the Municipality, and to assume the direct management and control of all such schools. At the same time 17(2) prevents the levy of a cess, except by the vote of two-thirds of the commissioners. Mr. Biss is of the opinion that power should be taken by Govt. to compel the levy of a cess for this purpose when necessary."<sup>11</sup>

The Municipalities had no cause of complaint against the scheme because actually they would have to spend less than what they used to spend previously. They would simply spend the money under a common plan.

The real problem of primary education, however, was not with the towns, but in the rural areas. Mr. Biss recommended that the Panchayeti Union Scheme should be abandoned and the Union Boards under the village Self-Govt. Act of 1919 should be allowed to organise their own complete schemes. The newly formed Union Boards were really very anxious to accomplish something without delay. They were very much enthusiastic and inclined to begin the actual work. In matter of primary education expedition was of vital importance. The Panchayeti Union Scheme was not being extend-

10. Mr. Biss—Ibid.

11. Mr. Biss—First Report (1921) on Primary Education in Bengal—Chap. IX.



ed further since 1922 when the Biss' Scheme was introduced.†

The Govt. could not pay the whole bill for primary education. The whole bill was an enormous one and could not be undertaken all at once. Hence the approach be selective first. Some areas should judiciously be selected for the purpose of introducing free, compulsory education and imposition of educational cess. Those areas keenest in this matter should first be selected. People wanted good education free of cost but when it came to paying two or three annas a month towards getting it started, enthusiasm cooled and the suggestion was resented in a painful anti-climax. Hence the proposal that Govt. should do everything by indirect taxation should be rejected and there was the very urgent need of educating the people in public finance. For this reason a special education cess was probably preferable to a mere increase in rates, though the latter had much to recommend it. The proportion paid by Govt. might be more than half, but for each Municipality and Union Board it ought to be fixed at definite ratio. To this end it might be well to classify local bodies according to their resources as needing Rs. 80,70,60 and 50% of the expenses as the share of the Government.

#### **Partial acceptance of the Scheme of Mr. Biss by Government.**

Mr. Biss' First Report was published by the Ministry of Education under resolution No. 1284 Edn., dated the 2nd July 1921. The resolution admitted that the report was a valuable contribution to the literature on the subject. It also contained the admission that "a wide expansion and definite improvement of primary education is necessary to the welfare of the country and that the time has come for the organisation of a complete national system of primary schools for Bengal, the object in view being the formation of a network of schools so placed as to be within the reach of every household."<sup>12</sup> The resolution also contained the statement that the Govt. of Bengal were already putting the ideas of the

12. Resolution by the Government of Bengal, No. 1284, dated, the 2nd July, 1921—para 1.

†Notes: There were nearly 4,000 Panchayeti Union Schools in the province but education in these schools was not free.



report to a practical test by experiments in certain areas. The ideas accepted by the resolution may be summarised here. The populated portion of a locality would be divided into "fixed school areas", each served by a central school designed to accommodate the majority of the boys of primary age within the school area. A circle of half a mile radius as a rough guide to the size of a school area was accepted. (The act of 1919 suggested one mile radius of a school area). The proposed schools would be publicly controlled by the local authorities, i.e., the Municipalities and the Union Boards under the guidance of District Boards. The teachers would be paid fixed salaries. For a common standard and for proper evaluation a public examination at the end of a primary school course would be re-established (para 2). Paragraph 3 of the resolution admitted that in some localities, it might be possible to introduce compulsion in order to secure the attendance of boys of 6 to 10 years of age, but it was not possible to make its application universal for the present. It should be the directive principle in future. The resolution further pointed out that the question of giving religious instruction was a difficult one calling for careful consideration. It indicated that primary and middle schools should together be regarded as the elementary schools of the future. The resolution accepted the suggestion of Mr. Biss as to the combination of Normal and Guru-training schools, and the training of all elementary teachers together at convenient centres. It contained the admission that the Govt. of Bengal had realised the great importance of the improvement of the training of teachers. Paragraph 6 of the resolution contained the financial proposals put forward by Mr. Biss. It clearly confessed that an expansion and improvement of primary education required more money. It was beyond the power of Govt. to bear the whole cost, and the present policy of dividing it between the central and local authorities should, therefore, be continued. The question of proportion should finally be determined both in regard to capital and recurring expenditure. The average incidence per head in the Municipalities for which calculations had been worked out was less than three annas per month. The suggestion of Mr. Biss as to the inclusion of a part of the local contribution was accepted by the resolu-



tion. It also indicated that the Govt. of Bengal were prepared to consider the possibility of allowing local bodies to raise loans locally from sources other than Govt. The resolution pointed out that the new primary system would undoubtedly have to be linked closely with a larger organisation of higher institutions which, together with it, would form a co-ordinated national system designed to meet the requirements of all sections of the people in respect not only of general or cultural instruction but also of vocational education. This larger organisation was receiving the attention of the Government.

"The Govt. had, thus, neither accepted fully nor rejected the scheme for primary education put forward by Mr. Biss. Implementation of the scheme entirely depended on the volition of the local bodies—Municipalities and Union Boards under the guidance of the District Boards. It had overwhelming financial implications. Government was ready to provide one half of expenditure involved for implementation of the scheme. For the other half the local bodies must make necessary arrangements for money through direct taxation (education tax) or any other way. If a cess were levied to meet the cost, the average amount payable by each ratepayer would be less than three annas a month if the primary schools were made free for all boys."<sup>13</sup>

#### **Reaction to the Scheme of Mr. Biss.**

About 10,000 copies of Mr. Biss' report were distributed to public bodies, to the press and to individuals. Mixed reactions were received by the Govt. on the report. Different local bodies and Govt. officials reacted differently to the proposals of Mr. Biss. Their main views may be mentioned here in brief :

- (1) A circle of a half mile radius of school area was regarded as the best and proper size. Half a mile radius in Municipal areas and one mile radius in rural areas were also suggested to be more suitable by some quarters. The Comilla Municipality opined that a

13. File No. 11C-54(2), Progs. Nos. 24-25, 1921.



circle of one mile radius should be convenient size of a school area.<sup>14</sup>

(2) Universal literacy should be the end and aim of the Government. But universal elementary education was regarded more necessary in villages than in Municipalities.

(3) It was regarded absolutely necessary to give some sort of religious instruction to the boys with a view to forming their character and preparing them for daily life. But religious instruction at the primary stage was too premature, dangerous, unpracticable, and it should be left to the discretion of the local bodies.

(4) The proposed coordinated national system of schools was welcomed for the gradual development of children's capacity for receiving instruction.

(5) "The Union Boards should have real control of elementary education and the Sub-Inspectors must act according to their orders. There should be an Education Board. Redtapism and unnecessary killing of time might be prevented by direct communication between the Union Boards and the District Boards. There should be prompt disposal of business."<sup>15</sup>

A separate committee of the Commissioners and rate-payers might be formed to supervise primary education. A small committee of selected members of local bodies and selected representatives of teachers might be formed.

(6) Primary education should be made entirely free as soon as possible, but compulsion should not be introduced so long as the people do not appreciate its benefit. Until the voluntary system was given a fair trial, the compulsory system could not be introduced. Compulsion should be introduced on experimental basis but it should be the directive principle for future

14. Letter of the Chairman of the Municipal Commissioners to the District Magistrate of Tippera, No. 227, dated the 6th June, 1922.

15. Opinion passed at a meeting of the education committee of the District Board, 24-Parganas, held on the 15th Nov., 1921.



educational policy. Persuasion and not compulsion should be the watch-word.

- (7) Teachers should be given living wages and it should be Rs. 20/- minimum as their remuneration was deplorably low and inadequate. They should acquire professional fitness through training. Guru-training schools should be amalgamated with the Normal schools and each district should have atleast one model training school. The combination of Guru-training schools with Normal schools was certainly desirable and welcomed. With regard to the salaries of teachers, the curriculum, the text-books and school buildings the local bodies should have full discretion in arranging these details according to local conditions.
- (8) There should be a public examination at the end of primary-school course for evolution of teachers' work, for gradation and stimulation of boys.
- (9) Vocational training, though desirable, was unpracticable at the primary stage particularly in a coordinated system of national education. The proposed social welfare centres might be entrusted with the task of providing vocational training.
- (10) Income from fees should not entirely be given up. Fees should be retained, but a lower rate. Relaxation should be given to poor students.
- (11) The English Bazar Municipality proposed that the proportion of cost between the Govt. and the local bodies should be as follows :
 

|           |                                      |
|-----------|--------------------------------------|
| Capital   | ... 75% (Govt.); 25% (Local bodies); |
| Recurring | ... 75% (Govt.); 25% (Local bodies). |

The Darjeeling and Comilla Municipalities, on the other hand, suggested that the Govt. should bear the entire capital cost and half of the recurring cost because it was the primary duty of the state to provide primary education. The Jalpai-guri Municipality suggested that the proportion of Govt. contribution to capital and recurring expenditure should definitely be fixed at half the total cost. The Chittaganj Municipality proposed that the proportion between the Govt. and local bodies in regard to capital and recurring expenditure



on primary education should be half and half.<sup>16</sup> The Commissioner of Burdwan Division emphasised that the entire capital expenditure should be borne by the Govt. and the recurring expenditure should be met two-thirds by Govt. and one-third by local bodies.<sup>17</sup> The Chairman Jessore District Board maintained that the distribution of cost between the Govt. and the local bodies should at least be two-thirds of recurring expenditure and three-fourths of the capital expenditure by the Government.<sup>18</sup>

- (12) Local borrowing was regarded as impracticable and the economic capacity of the local bodies for repayment was doubtful. Hence it should be discouraged. The Comilla Municipality, however, favoured local loans to meet the recurring expenditure.
- (13) Absence of any satisfactory inspection was a real clog and a hindrance rather than a source of strength and inspiration.
- (14) The Provincial Govt. ought to contribute the whole of the cost incurred on the primary education. If due to financial straits the Provincial Govt. does not provide the entire cost the proposed reform will be held in abeyance for an indefinite period.
- (15) The financial position of the District Boards was highly unsatisfactory. The levy of an education cess was out of the question, as taxation had already reached its extreme limit. Imposition of such a cess would really be an oppression upon the people. It would be inexpedient, unpopular, unpalatable and raise hue and cry against the measure. But the Darjeeling Municipality favoured the imposition of "education rate". Economy, however, had to be effected in every possible direction. The Comilla Municipality was of the opinion that in order to make education free,

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16. File-3-P-5(11)—Opinion of the Chairman of the Chittaganj Municipality, No. 1545G dated the 11th July, 1922.

17. File No. 3P-5(17)—Letter of the Divisional Commissioner to the Secretary to the Govt. of Bengal, Department of Education, No. 1127 dated Calcutta, the 3rd Feb., 1923.

18. Letter No. 228 dated the 28th June, 1922 of the Chairman of the Jessore District Board to the District Magistrate.



additional cess might be introduced on experimental basis.

As the matter was referred to the Divisional Inspectors for their opinion, they criticised the Report of Mr. Biss from different points of view. They maintained that though the report was revolutionary, it involved tremendous cost. It went far beyond the instructions. The suggestion for social welfare centres was utopian. The report tended to disturb and destroy the entire educational set up for the sake of an experiment. They, however, maintained that the expenditure on primary schools of Bengal should be increased and that Govt. should contribute more generously towards the cost of primary education. They criticised the co-ordination proposal as the weakest and over-complicated part of the scheme and 'concentration' as the difficult one in rural areas. (But Mr. W. C. Wordsworth, the then officiating D. P. I. was of the firm conviction that co-ordination and concentration were not only necessary in any good scheme of education but also inevitable. Bad schools in large numbers in rural areas were not desirable and might not yield good results). The Divisional Inspectors further criticised that the proposals of religious instruction and vocational training had been unnecessarily introduced into the Report.

The proposal for the appointment of a separate Director for Primary Education was also criticised and opposed by the Divisional Inspectors on the grounds that (a) primary education was fundamentally a matter for local bodies, (b) that a central authority could do little more than suggest general lines of policy, (c) that such a proposal would add to complication and cost. Mr. W. C. Wordsworth also pleaded for rejection of the proposal. He was, of course, of the opinion that time had come for free and compulsory education in the Presidency. The Divisional Inspectors strongly pleaded that the proposal of Mr. Biss to abolish the Panchayeti Union Scheme which was proved to be a successful one to enable the Union Boards to organise their own complete schemes was injudicious and inadequate appreciation of facts. The proposal of abolition of an improved and working scheme in favour of some vague one would prove disastrous. The diversion of the Panchayeti Union funds for capital expenditure



of individual experimental schemes was considered to be a bad precedent. The rate of progress of primary education previously attained would be held up by these proposals of Mr. Biss. Much of the scheme proposed by Mr. Biss was ideally perfect, but practically unattainable.<sup>19</sup>

The appointment of Mr. Biss was also criticised in many quarters as injudicious. "In an evil hour the Govt. of Bengal appointed Mr. Biss of the Indian Educational Service to investigate into and report on the conditions of the expansion and improvement of primary education in Bengal. Could not the Bengal Govt. find any experienced and expert Indian? Such a responsible work was given to a man who was completely ignorant of the language, literature, social and religious customs and the popular manners of the country".<sup>20</sup> Mr. Biss did not even tour all the villages of Bengal and talk directly to even half of the total number of primary teachers to get at the real facts about primary education.

Mr. Biss proposed to abolish the Bengali script. This was a preposterous proposal and both the Hindus and Muslims raised hue and cry against it. Mr. Biss proposed to teach the Bengali language with the help of the Roman script. The proposal was not only humiliating but also suicidal to a subject. The *Hitavadi* (Cal.) of the 26th January, 1923 strongly protested against Mr. Biss' proposal to replace Bengali alphabets by the Roman script.

"In order to give effect to Mr. Biss's scheme, many Municipalities imposed "education cess" under the Primary Education Act of 1919 and as per recommendations of Mr. Biss. On the 16th January, 1921 Rangpur Municipality sanctioned a levy of education cess. But the rate payers did not like it. They, in their Association meeting held on the 23rd January, 1921, resolved not to pay the imposed education cess. They made a strong protest against the imposition of such a cess. They resolved that the levy of education cess was most undesirable and unnecessary. Though compulsory and free edu-

19. File No. 3P-5, Progs. Nos. 764-794B. July, 1927—the letter of W. C. Wordsworth, officiating D. P. I., Bengal, dated Calcutta, No. 407, the 1st Sept., 1922 to the Secy., Department of Education, Govt. of Bengal.

20. The *Bangavasi* (Cal.) of the 20th Jan., 1923.



cation was desirable, yet for this purpose no additional tax should be imposed. The cost of defraying the charges of free education should be entirely met from the provincial revenues and from the general Municipal funds. The public are already over-taxed in various ways and are now hard-pressed. The addition of any new tax will strain their purse and exasperate them."<sup>21</sup> "We do not see our way to approve of Mr. Biss's proposal to levy a tax. It is impossible for Bengal to bear the burden of fresh taxation. If a cess be levied on some pretext, it may serve as a precedent for levying others. Government should bear, as in other progressive countries of the world, the cost of providing elementary education. It should be regarded as a primary obligation on the part of the Govt. Nowhere in the world is education starved to feed the police, the military and the railway".<sup>22</sup>

"The Bengalis are already consumed by poverty. If over this an education tax is imposed, their condition will become worse. The poor villagers can not very often pay the Chaukidari tax, although the sum may be only 4 or 6 annas".<sup>23</sup> The Suraj, Pabna of the 1st August, 1921 strongly protested against any education tax as recommended by Mr. Biss in his primary education report. "So long as the Reserved Department do not come under the control of Indians, and our countrymen are not appointed to high posts, instead of Europeans, money will not be forthcoming. But money must be secured at all costs. Bengal can not get universal literacy without the expenditure of a large sum of money".<sup>24</sup>

Arrangements for spreading primary education in the country was an essential thing to lead the nation out of the depth of ignorance into light. Certainly we want Swaraj. But introduction of universal primary education was necessary in order to gain it. Mr. Biss put forth the conclusions of his investigations as follows: "We recognise no doubt that a cess on Education is bound to come, but it will be possible for it to come only when the country has full confidence in the Govt. and not before, and when people understand that

21. File No. 1-A-1, Progs. Nos.—60-848, 1927.

22. The Dainik Basumati (Cal.), the 5th and the 14th July, 1921.

23. The Jasohar, the 16th July, 1921.

24. The Bengali (Cal.), the 30th July, 1921.



the bulk of the money will not go for unnecessary inspecting officers and too costly buildings. Till that time all such schemes have only an academic interest".<sup>25</sup>

"To meet the expenses of primary education Mr. Biss proposed imposition of education tax even on the local shopkeepers. This is the most objectionable part of his report. The rural people of Bengal cannot have one meal a day. If Mr. Biss' proposals are carried out they will have to remain without a meal".<sup>26</sup>

"Response to Mr. Biss' scheme was mixed and at the same time disheartening. As a report reception to it, no doubt, was favourable because people came to know a comprehensive plan for free and universal elementary education. But the whole question of imposition of cesses created adverse sentiments towards the scheme. Many local authorities entered a very definite non possumus; other requested a modification of the incidence of cost in their favour, with a corresponding demand for increased Govt. aid; while a few accepted the scheme in full, and others agreed to shoulder the burden of cost."<sup>27</sup>

#### Implementation of the Scheme.

The scheme formulated by Mr. Biss was partially accepted by the Govt. of Bengal and made applicable in several areas. The central idea underlying his proposals was the formulation of a network of schools so placed as to be within the reach of every household. To this end the populated portion of a given locality was to be divided into fixed school areas and served by central schools designed to accommodate the great majority of the boys of school-going age in the neighbourhood. Government made an offer to every local body of a grant to start new schools on a 50 percent basis. Accordingly the ideas of Mr. Biss were put to practical test by experiments in certain areas. These experiments were on the basis of half the cost being met by Govt. and the other half by local bodies concerned.

25. Quoted in the Herald (Dacca) of the 19th December, 1922.

26. The Bangavasi (Cal.) of the 20th Jan., 1923.

27. Progress of Education in Bengal—1917-1922, Chap. V, para 169.



"During the year 1922-1923 there was a provision of Rs. 1,50,000 in the budget to give effect to Mr. Biss' schemes of central primary schools. Govt. agreed to contribute half the recurring and non-recurring expenditure for starting the schools. Only six Municipalities and twelve Unions accepted the offer and a sum of Rs. 32,718 was sanctioned for the purpose. The chief obstacle to progress in this direction was the reluctance of local bodies to make large contribution or to undertake fresh taxation."<sup>28</sup>

In the following year (1923-24) "there was a provision of Rs. 75,000 in the Education Budget for giving effect to the scheme of central primary schools as formulated by Mr. Biss. Only six Municipalities and ten Unions accepted the offer. A sum of Rs. 43,524 was accordingly sanctioned for the purpose."<sup>29</sup>

"As there was no financial stringency during the year 1925-26 a recurring sum of Rs. 1,00,000 was available for the introduction in Municipal and Union Board areas of schemes of free primary education on the basis of a contribution by Government of half the cost. During the year 1925-1926, 19 schemes in urban and rural areas for free primary education were sanctioned. The whole of the grant of Rs. 1 lakh was utilised. But it cannot be said that the scheme has been warmly welcomed by local bodies in Bengal. At first the Govt. offer to bear half the expense, both capital and recurring, was greeted with some enthusiasm by District and Municipal Boards. These bodies now complain of paucity of funds and plead their inability to bear the expenditure required for them. The difficulty in the way of the expansion of the scheme is one of local finance, and it is obvious that without taxation, voluntarily imposed by the local bodies, or enforced upon them from without, as part of a comprehensive scheme of advance, the present state of stagnation must continue indefinitely. The scheme was initiated with high hopes but the failure of the local bodies to avail themselves of the opportunity formed a painful anti-climax."<sup>30</sup>

28. Report on Public Instruction in Bengal, 1922-23, Chap. V.

29. Report on Public Instruction in Bengal, 1923-24, Chap. V.

30. Report on Public Instruction in Bengal, 1925-26, Chap. V.



Thus the scheme of Mr. Biss made a very slow progress, owing chiefly to the reluctance of local bodies to contribute their share of the cost or to levy a cess. The rigidity of departmental requirements was said to be another handicap. The scheme aimed at providing each Municipal or Union Board area eventually with a central school, and as many ancillary schools as were required—the cost being shared equally by Govt. and the local authority concerned, and the latter had the option of levying an education cess under section 17 of the Bengal Primary Education Act of 1919. "Some progress was, however, made, and in 1927-28 a sum of Rs. 16,619 was sanctioned for opening primary schools of this type in the Municipal and Union Board areas. Administrative approval was accorded during the year 1928-29 to an additional grant of Rs. 25,000 for further progress of the scheme. The Chittaganj Municipality was the first local authority to make primary education compulsory within its area under the Act of 1919. With the exception of Chittaganj Municipality there was no locality in Bengal where compulsory primary education was adopted. In Municipal area of Chittaganj primary education was also free and some cess was imposed for the purpose."<sup>31</sup>

The progress of the scheme continued to be slow, as under the scheme, the local bodies were required to bear half the cost both recurring and capital, and no great enthusiasm was shown in providing this share of the money. However nine more new schemes were sanctioned during the year 1929-30. On the other hand three schemes in urban areas and eight schemes in rural areas were abandoned during the year.

"On the whole, as a result of the implementation of the scheme formulated by Mr. Biss in nearly every direction primary education made a certain degree of progress in Bengal. Every year more than two millions of pupils attended primary schools numbering nearly sixty thousand. Of these the Muhammadans formed nearly 54 per cent of the roll strength and the Hindus and other communities together formed only 46 percent. In the whole presidency there was one primary school to every 2 square miles and 2.2 villages. For a few years Bengal spent nearly Rs. 84,00,000 every year

31. Report on Public Instruction in Bengal, 1927-28, Chap. V.



on primary education, of which a sum of Rs. 26,00,000 was contributed by Government, Rs. 18,00,000 by District Boards and Municipalities and the balance viz. : Rs. 40,00,000 by guardians of pupils and benefactors in the shape of fees and donations".<sup>32</sup>

### Evaluation of the Scheme.

In Education Department file 3-P-4 of 1922 Mr. Biss recorded and dated the 26th February 1923 his views on the opinions received in his first report and it is this note which contains the clearest exposition of what his scheme was. "Primary education" he says, "should be controlled by local bodies, i.e., by Municipalities in towns and by Union Boards, wherever they exist in rural areas. Where Union Boards do not exist, District Boards should deal with the school direct, or through local boards."

But primary education had been controlled by District Boards and Municipalities ever since the passing of the Local Self-Govt. and Municipal Acts. There was in fact absolutely nothing original in Mr. Biss' proposal. He proposed that Union Boards should play an important part in the organisation of primary education in rural areas but even in this suggestion there was nothing new. The whole object of the Bengal Village Self-Govt. Act of 1919 was to develop the system of Self-Govt. in the rural areas of Bengal. In 1921 Bengal (urban) Primary Education Act of 1919 was also amended to extend the provisions of the Act to Union Committees.

Mr. Biss was asked to carry out a survey and there was not the slightest reason why he should have suggested a new system of local authorities. "His reports are, as administrative documents, confusing, because they mix up essentials with accidentals, premises with conclusions, that which is fundamental with that which is derivative."<sup>33</sup>

Mr. Biss suggested how the local authorities might and should proceed to the organisation of a "national system" of

32. "History of Elementary Education in India", J. M. Sen, Chap. VI, pages—211-212.  
 33. Education Deptt. File No. 3P-5.B, July 1927. Progs. Nos. 764-794—Paragraph 4 of the "Memorandum" on the present position of primary education in Bengal".



primary schools. But at that time there was no national system of primary schools. The system was purely and simply "provincial".

While Mr. Biss indicated the approximate cost of his national system, he gave us no clue whatever as to how or where these considerable sums to be found. The local authorities were not in a position to raise a substantial portion of the cost of the proposed system. Mr. Biss proposed half and half contribution of the cost by the local authorities and the Govt. but most of the local authorities were reluctant to follow the proposal. They simply avoided it. There was visible apathy if not antipathy. It is, therefore, clear that a necessary preliminary condition of his proposals was that Govt. should agree to find practically the whole of the additional expenditure involved, both capital and recurring—this expenditure taking the form of grants from provincial revenues handed over to local authorities. This was, no doubt, desirable but not practically feasible. Mr. Biss' enthusiasm was defeated by the sordid problem of ways and means.

Govt. and the local authorities were really engaged in a game of mutual bluff. The state said "we will finance any local authority which carried out any specific proposal of Mr. Biss on a 50 : 50 basis." This is bluff because if all the local authorities had been in a position to meet their quota, the state would have had to go back on its promise, for its resources were exceedingly meagre.

Hence the net result of Mr. Biss' most praiseworthy efforts was a propaganda which failed and certain other well understood lines of development for sporadic experiments also almost failed owing to the local contributions not being continued.

Mr. Biss planked on Union Boards and largely ignored District Boards. But Union Boards had little or no capacity and experience to provide and organise primary schools. Apart from this, Union Boards were not established as yet in many districts under the Bengal Village Self-Govt. Act of 1919. Competent circle officers were also not appointed to supervise them. The position of the Ministry of Education in respect of the Union Boards as possible local educational authorities was doubtful. In this matter the Union Boards should have



to work under the District Boards. The Ministry of Education should deal with the District Boards and not with the Union Boards in respect of educational matters. It is conceivable that a District Board should have a primary education policy and a machinery for carrying that policy out.

The stumbling block in any real advance in primary education was the lack of means and it was true enough. There was no real solution of this urgent and complicated problem. There was also no central organisation to deal with this knotty problem. A more certain basis of support and more responsible agencies of control were needed for the real advancement of primary education particularly in rural areas.

In England some sort of central agency was created by 1867. Under the Elementary Education Act of 1870 a certain basis of support and more responsible agencies were created.

Under the Elementary Education Act of 1870 the central authority was the Board of Education for England and Wales. This Board had the final say in matters of educational administration and finance over the local educational authorities. The Primary Education Act of 1919 and the subsequent scheme of Mr. Biss did not provide such central authority to compel either the Municipalities or the District Boards to provide more money for primary education. These local authorities used to spend merely the sums of money which Govt. transferred to them from time to time. Municipalities had the legal power to spend more money on primary education under the Primary Education Act of 1919 should they desire to do so. A Union Board could apparently do the same. But a District Board could not legally raise any more funds for primary education. Still the local authorities had the primary responsibility to work out their schemes for the provision of primary education in consultation with the school inspecting officers of the Govt. They had now had the advantage of studying Mr. Biss' reports. Of course it is true that unless the local authorities including Municipalities were compelled to provide primary education, no tangible and worthmentioning results could be expected. The Primary Education Act of 1973 has suggested the formation of a central elementary education board known as the Bengal Primary Education



Board. This should be regarded as a central education authority.

Mr. Biss' scheme is also criticised as too expensive. This is no doubt true to some extent in comparison with the then primary education cost. Modifications of his proposals by District Boards (Union Boards) and Municipalities for cheaper performance were welcomed. The Govt. was ready to bear its share if the local bodies came forward to a great extent. "No solution of the problem is possible without a comprehensive bill which places the responsibility for the foundation of schools wherever they are needed upon the local bodies, and in one way or other compels them to raise the bulk of the necessary funds within the area affected. It is for the statesman and the politician, and not the educationist, to lay this essential foundation of the educationist's future work."<sup>34</sup>

The scheme of Mr. Biss failed to achieve the desired success because most of the Municipalities were reluctant to impose education cess and pay their own contribution. They hesitated to commit themselves to any large expenditure. The main difficulty lay in the levying of a cess which was the essential feature of the scheme. "The Municipalities as a rule have not shown much enthusiasm to bear their share of the cost of starting and maintaining schools. The notable exceptions are, however, Chittagong, Berhampore, Burdwan, Howrah, Rangpur, Dacca, Asansole and Budge Budge. The District Boards, on the other hand, have been more active. Only a little more than 250 schools under the Biss' scheme were set up throughout the whole Bengal Presidency in a scattered way. The Calcutta Corporation, of course, extended their scheme considerably and they had over 230 primary schools for boys and girls."<sup>35</sup> These schools were free and employed well-paid teachers. Yet the scheme lost much of its charm and vitality within a couple of years. The scheme no doubt had its own intrinsic worth but so far as its implementation is concerned it was far from satisfactory. It is true

34. Report on Public Instruction in Bengal, 1924-25.

35. "Primary Education in Bengal"—para 6(b), 1934—E, Bengal Publicity Board".



that a public system of primary schools came into being in Bengal with the experiments on Mr. Biss' scheme. If this scheme could have been implemented in right earnest, the history of primary education in Bengal might have been written in different letters. With the introduction of the Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Act of 1930 the much talked of scheme of Mr. Biss was discontinued. "The scheme of Mr. Biss met a premature-death as the entire period of its operation was unfavourable due to disturbed political situation, acute economic crisis and frequent changes in the Ministry of Education. The revolutionary proposals of Mr. Biss were launched upon the country in circumstances which were extraordinary unpropitious and that for three reasons :

- (a) the non-co-operation movement was at its height ;
- (b) the financial condition of the country was at the lowest possible point ;
- (c) frequent changes in the form and personnel of the Education Department.

The period was one of quiet recuperation and slow development and not one of revolutionary changes. Hence no great progress could be made towards the ideal of a free and compulsory system of elementary education in Bengal."<sup>36</sup>

The old story of financial stringency so far as the Local Self-Govt. Bodies are concerned, was repeated and their aversion to the imposition of additional education cess caused by political and other socio-economic considerations proved a sub-merged rock which caused the sinking of the ship.

36. The Seventh Quinquennial Review—on the progress of Education in Bengal for the years 1922 to 27, Chapter I, page 5.



## CHAPTER VII

### THE HARTOG COMMITTEE REPORT (1929)—FIRST OFFICIAL REVIEW OF THE CONDITION AND GROWTH OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION.

In spite of the Primary Education Act of 1919 and the introduction of the Biss' scheme the condition of primary education was far from satisfactory. The state of affairs remained almost as it was before these "remarkable" steps were taken. There was rapid expansion of education. But this led to corresponding deterioration of quality. Consequently, along with wide-spread political discontent, there was dissatisfaction against the educational system both in official and non-official circles. The educational system was largely ineffective and wasteful.

According to the Government of India Act of 1919, a Royal Commission on constitutional reforms was to be appointed in 1929. But owing to the continued political agitation in India that the Reforms of 1919 were unsatisfactory, a Royal Commission, presided over by Sir John Simon was appointed a little earlier in 1927. This Commission (under the Government of India Act, 1919) was asked to report on the growth of education in British India and was also authorised to appoint an auxiliary Commission for the purpose. Accordingly, the Commission appointed this Committee on 31st May, 1928 presided over by Sir Philip Hartog, who had served for several years in India as a member of the Calcutta University Commission, and as the Vice-Chancellor of the Dacca University. The Committee was appointed to make enquiries into the growth of education in British India. The report of the Committee is one of the most important documents in the development of Indian education particularly elementary education. The auxiliary Committee popularly known as the Hartog Committee submitted the report in September 1929. The Committee devoted much attention to mass education as its condition was very much unsatisfactory. In dealing with primary education the Committee at length discussed the extent of literacy and its importance.



Literacy is a necessary qualification for franchise. Literacy is not education, but only a means to education and to enable an individual to exercise an intelligent vote. Literacy is indispensable to education. The Committee specifically dealt with the "growth" of education to forecast the "potentialities of progress" in future. It dealt with the question of growth both in quantity and quality on the basis of data supplied by Central and provincial Governments and private individuals and institutions. The committee also considered the effect of working of the new system of reforms (Mont-Ford Reforms) itself on the growth of education.

There was rapid development of mass education during the decade 1917-27, inspite of some set back caused by the non-cooperation movement. The percentage of increase in India between 1917-27 in the primary stage was 44.4. Earlier there was slow advance of mass education for which the Govt. policy had been criticised. Both people and Govt. were taking keen interest in education. The Central and provincial Govts including local bodies were now prepared to increase educational expenditure. There was a wider demand for mass education in the country. Different educationally backward communities had awakened to the need and possibilities of education for their children. Educated women also realised the importance of education of their sisters. There had been a great awakening to the need for improvement both in quality and quantity of education.

The transfer of the department of education to popular control in 1921 as represented by a Minister, had both increased the public interest in it and made it more sensitive to the current of public needs and public opinion. Many primary education Acts were passed during 1917-27 in most of the provinces in India including Bengal for introducing universal, free and compulsory primary education. These Acts transferred large powers of administration and control over primary education to the local authorities. In Bengal the Primary Education Act of 1919 and the subsequent scheme of Mr. E. E. Biss made the Municipalities and the Union Boards responsible for preparing schemes for the expansion and development of primary education. The initiative in the matter of introducing compulsion was thus left with the local



authorities. They were authorised to levy an education cess to meet their own share of the cost of providing primary education, whether on a compulsory or on a voluntary basis. Government undertook to assist the local authorities financially to enable them to introduce compulsory education. The age of compulsion was generally fixed at 6 to 11. Provision was also made for prosecuting parents for failure to send their children to school. Primary education was made a subject of local administration and responsibility. Provincial Govts. liberalised the constitution of local Self-Govt. institutions, gave them additional powers of taxation, and made them responsible for the introduction and enforcement of compulsory primary education.

The largely increased enrolment in primary schools indicated that the old time apathy of the masses was breaking down. There had been a social and political awakening of the women of India and an expressed demand on their behalf for education and social reform. There had been rapid progress of Muhammadan education, and education of the depressed classes. On all sides there had been a desire on the part of leaders of public opinion to understand and to grapple with the complex and difficult problems of universal, free and compulsory primary education. Large additional expenditure had been proposed by Education Ministers, and willingly voted by the Legislative Councils.<sup>1</sup>

"The causes of this accelerated expansion are not far to seek. Economic conditions have improved, the finances of the provinces have expanded, postwar difficulties have largely disappeared, public interest has been directed towards primary and mass education, programmes of educational expansion have been undertaken both under and outside of the Elementary Education Acts in the various provinces, a large number of new schools have been opened, unrecognised schools have been recognised, and the number of areas in which compulsion has been introduced has increased."<sup>2</sup>

That was one side of the picture, but there was another.

1. The Report of the Hartog Committee—Chap. XVII, page 345.
2. Quinquennial Review of the progress of Education in India (1922-27)—pp. 115-16.



During the next quinquennium the picture was not so rosy as it was before. Throughout the whole educational system there was waste and ineffectiveness. In the primary system the waste was most appalling. The vast increase in numbers in primary schools produced no commensurate increase in literacy, for only a small proportion of those who were at the primary stage reached Class IV, in which the attainment of literacy might be expected. Under the conditions of rural life there was little chance for a child of attaining literacy ; and indeed there were chances of relapse into illiteracy. The wastage in the case of girls was even more serious than in the case of boys.

The progress of mass education was thus highly unsatisfactory inspite of the vast increase of primary schools. Government was very much indifferent to the development of mass education. During the period 1927-37 there was a visible slackening of the pace of expansion of mass education, and this was mainly due to two causes : (1) the world wide economic depression, which led to the abandonment of most of the schemes of expansion and to large curtailments in the existing expenditure ; (2) the recommendation of the Hartog Committee to the effect that Govt. should adopt a policy of consolidation rather than of expansion. This recommendation dominated the official view point during the decade 1927-37.

The Committee pointed out the following special difficulties in the path of the progress of primary education :—

- (1) "The problem of mass education is chiefly a rural problem as only 20 percent of the population lives in towns and 70 per cent is dependent on agriculture. In rural areas school units are usually small ; adequate staffing is more expensive ; the conditions of life are not attractive to teachers ; teachers are isolated and the difficulties of administration, supervision and inspection are much greater ; it is more difficult to secure regular and prolonged attendance of children.
- (ii) The great majority of parents who live on the land are poor, and their poverty is aggravated by improvidence and debt. They are illiterate, conservative



and unwilling to send their children to schools. Their outlook is narrow and confined to their immediate surrounding. The general economic position of the villager is unfavourable to the spread of mass education.

- (iii) The villages are scattered, roads and means of communications are very bad. Physical and climatic conditions are not favourable for education.
- (iv) There are large areas which are inaccessible and economically backward. Due to these reasons mass education in rural areas is very difficult.
- (v) Regularity of attendance is prejudiced by epidemic and seasonal illness.
- (vi) The problem of effective school provision is complicated by barriers of caste, religion, language, sex etc.
- (vii) There is no social and economic solidarity and as such public system of mass education is not possible.
- (viii) There is no equality of educational opportunity.
- (ix) A strong, concerted and well-directed effort is needed for an effective system of popular education."<sup>3</sup>

The committee mentioned the rapid growth in the number of primary schools and the pupils attending them but came to the conclusion that the position was not as rosy as the figures would lead one to infer. The committee found that there was a good deal of waste in the system which acted as a set-off against the progress in numbers. In the opinion of the committee, the main causes of this waste were :—(a) wastage and stagnation : “wastage” means premature withdrawal of pupils from school at any stage before the completion of the primary course. “Stagnation” means retention in a school class for a period of more than one year. Primary education is ineffective unless it produces literacy. Class IV Standard education is necessary for such literacy. In Bengal in 1925-1926 out of 100 boys only 11 and out of 100 girls only 2 attained such literacy. Hence expenditure on primary education was largely wasted.<sup>4</sup> The following table shows the proportion of pupils in classes I, IV and V.

3. The Report of the Hartog Committee—Chap. IV.

4. The Report of the Hartog Committee—Chap. IV, P. 48.



TABLE—1

| Province | Boys' schools |          |         | Girls' schools |          |         |
|----------|---------------|----------|---------|----------------|----------|---------|
|          | 1922-23       | 1925-26  | 1926-27 | 1922-23        | 1925-26  | 1926-27 |
|          | Class—I       | Class—IV | Class—V | Class—I        | Class—IV | Class—V |
| Bengal   | 100           | 11       | 7       | 100            | 2        | 1       |

Many pupils stagnate in a class for a couple of years. The longer a child remains in one class the more he is discouraged and neglected. Wastage and stagnation occur to a much larger extent in rural areas than in urban areas, and are also greater in primary schools than in the primary departments of secondary schools.

The other causes of this appalling waste were (a) rapid relapse into illiteracy due to hostile environments ; (b) irregular attendance caused by climate and geographical conditions ; (c) absence of systematic efforts at adult education ; (d) absence of separate provision for boys and girls ; (e) inadequate utilisation of many existing schools ; (f) large number of inefficient single-teacher schools ; (g) ephemeral character of many primary schools ; (h) unsuitable curriculum, unrelated to conditions of village life and the interest of the home ; (i) ineffective teaching due to paucity of trained teachers and their deplorably low salary ; (j) inadequacy of inspecting staff ; and (k) inadequate provision and unsatisfactory distribution of the existing schools.

Primary schools were very unevenly distributed in Bengal. Both Mr. M. P. West and Mr. E. E. Biss referred to the faulty distribution of primary schools and better distribution was emphasised by them. "Primary schools were distributed so unevenly in Bengal that there were large areas without a school while in others many little schools indulging in cut-throat competition for the children." "The result was that there was lack of systematization in the primary school system of Bengal. What was needed in Bengal was not a substantial

5. Note :—Mr. J. A. Richey, educational commissioner of the Govt. of India, was of opinion that single-teacher schools were indispensable in India. (Paper on Indian Education under the Reforms, Asiatic Review, January 1929, p. 89). 76% schools were single-teacher schools. There were 40,000 such schools in Bengal.



increase in the number of primary schools but their distribution on a well-defined plan, their proper and systematic organisation.”<sup>6</sup> “Of the provinces of India Bengal has the largest number of primary schools. One school covers roughly about 1.3 square miles in area. But the schools are very badly distributed. Out of 109,595 villages in Bengal at least 72,302 have no schools, while 61,502 primary schools are distributed in 37,292 villages. The majority of the schools in Bengal are single-teacher schools with three classes. In 1936-1937 there were 36,081 such schools. The percentage of single-teacher schools to the total number was 58.7 in 1936-1937; this shows considerable progress, for the number of such schools was estimated to be about 75 per cent of the total number of schools in 1926-1927.”<sup>7</sup>

The committee, therefore, unequivocally condemned a policy of hasty expansion and recommended concentration on consolidation and qualitative improvement. Its principal recommendations were :—(1) A policy of consolidation should be adopted and haphazard expansion at the cost of quality should be dropped, (2) The minimum duration of primary course should be of four years. (3) It is the teacher who makes education. The success or failure of any scheme of instruction depends ultimately on the teacher. Hence far-reaching improvements were needed in the quality, training, status and pay of the teacher. The standard of the general education of primary teachers should be raised; the training course should be sufficiently long; the training institutions for primary teachers should be adequately staffed and made more efficient; refresher courses and conferences should be held at intervals to improve the methods of teaching and to establish some touch with recent developments; the remuneration and conditions of service of primary teachers should also be improved to attract and retain men of good quality to the profession. (4) The curriculum of primary schools should be liberalised. It should be based on the needs and conditions of village life. (5) More trained teachers should be

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6. The Govt. Memorandum on the Growth of Education in Bengal (1929) page 6.
  7. Ninth Quinquennial Review on the progress of Education in Bengal (1932-37)—Chap. III.



appointed in primary schools. Then only 44 per cent primary teachers in India were trained. The state of affairs in Bengal was deplorable. Only 25 per cent of the primary teachers in Bengal presidency were trained. (6) School hours and school holidays should be adjusted to seasonal and local requirements. (7) Special attention should be given to the lowest class in primary schools and determined effort should be made to reduce the large extent of stagnation and wastage that prevail therein. The lowest class presenting peculiar difficulties should be placed in the care of the best teachers. (8) Village uplift and community work should be undertaken and centred in the school. The school should become the main centre of village life. The system of education should stimulate the educated not to flee from but to uplift village life, to strive for self-improvement instead of merely running away to the towns. (9) No hasty attempts should be made to introduce compulsion. Compulsion should be the guiding principle because the goal of universal primary education could not be attained without the adoption of the principle of compulsion. The adoption of compulsion should not entirely be left to the local option. Municipalities were in a better position to apply compulsion than rural areas in which the villages and population were scattered, the financial resources were small and most of the schools were unsuitable. Hence attention should be directed to careful preparation of the ground particularly in the rural areas. (10) The inspecting staff of Govt. should be considerably strengthened both in quality and quantity. During the decade 1917-1927 the condition of inspection was deplorable. The number of the inspecting staff was totally inadequate to discharge duties efficiently. The total number of inspecting staff in the Bengal Presidency was 311. Each of the 5 Divisions had its Divisional Inspectorate. The number of Second Inspectors was 9 and Assistant Inspectors 5. Each District had a separate Inspector who belonged to the Bengal Education Service (28). There was also Sub-Divisional Inspectors (61) who were mainly in charge of the Middle schools. The Sub-Inspectors (243) and Assistant Sub-Inspectors (19) were principally responsible for primary education. There was no expert and sympathetic supervision of primary education. Inspection



was gradually becoming ineffective due to the increase of schools. A Sub-Inspector had to carry a huge working load. He had to inspect more than 300 schools in a year. No man could do this effectively and usefully. This was practically impossible for a single man particularly in villages where the means of communication in those days were highly unsatisfactory. The Sub-Inspector had no fixed office, nor even a peon. The axe of retrenchment always fell first on the Inspectorate. The recommendations of the Retrenchment Committee (1923, 32) and the financial stringency of the time gave a death-blow to the inspectorate in Bengal Presidency. The remuneration of a Sub-Inspector was highly unsatisfactory and unbelievable. His daily allowance for mileage was negligible (Rs. 2/-). The Inspector was always regarded as an enemy to criticise, not as a friend to cooperate with and appreciate. The inspectors had no taste or attraction for their hazardous routine work. Most of the inspectors were inexperienced young secondary trained graduates. They were often unsuited to the work. They had no conception of the problems of primary education. They were chiefly academic minded. Most of them were men of the town little or no idea of the needs of a rural school. The problem of inspection could only be solved by recruiting in large numbers experienced and trained teachers from the districts through competitive examinations.<sup>8</sup> Even today the impact of inspection is almost negligible.

TABLE—II

Expenditure and percentage of total revenue spent on education.

| Province       | Govt. expenditure on education (in lakhs) |             | Percentage of total revenue spent on education |             |
|----------------|---|-------------|--|-------------|
|                | 1922<br>Rs.                               | 1927<br>Rs. | 1922<br>Rs.                                    | 1927<br>Rs. |
| Madras         | 158                                       | 202         | 13.4   | 13.3        |
| Bombay         | 170                                       | 199         | 12.9   | 13.6        |
| Bengal         | 135                                       | 148         | 16.3   | 14.0        |
| Bihar & Orissa | 49  | 72          | 11.0   | 12.5        |

The Table II shows that the percentage spent on education decreased in Bengal between 1922 and 1927.

8. Eighth Quinquennial Review on the progress of Education in Bengal (1927-32)—Chap- III.

(11) The Hartog Committee threw a flood of light on the educational finance of the provinces in relation to the Imperial Govt. Since the introduction of the Reforms, Govt. aid to education had been given almost entirely from provincial revenues. The following Table shows the direct and indirect provincial expenditure on education and its ratio to the provincial revenues :

TABLE—III

Government expenditure on education per head.

| Province                | Year—1927 |
|-------------------------|-----------|
|                         | Rs.       |
| Madras ... ..           | .48       |
| Bombay ... ..           | 1.02      |
| Bengal ... ..           | .31       |
| Bihar and Orissa ... .. | .21       |

TABLE—IV

Total expenditure on education per head.

| Province                | 1917 | 1922 | 1927 |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|
|                         | Rs.  | Rs.  | Rs.  |
| Madras ... ..           | .52  | .80  | 1.07 |
| Bombay ... ..           | .79  | 1.53 | 1.97 |
| Bengal ... ..           | .53  | .72  | .85  |
| Bihar and Orissa ... .. | .24  | .34  | .52  |

The above Tables (III and IV) show that Govt. expenditure formed only a part of the total expenditure, the remainder being provided from local board funds, fees and other sources. Bihar and Orissa, and Bengal had the lowest revenue per head of population ; and they had the lowest Govt. expenditure per head on education.<sup>9</sup>

9. The Report of the Hartog Committee—Chap. XIV, pp. 255-56.



TABLE—V

The proportion spent on education from different sources in the provinces—1927.

| Province | Govt. funds | Local funds | Total public funds | Fees  | Other sources | Total direct and indirect education expenditure (in lakhs) |
|----------|-------------|-------------|--------------------|-------|---------------|--|
|          |             |             |                    |       |               | Rs.  |
| Madras   | 44.72       | 14.64       | 59.36              | 19.59 | 21.05         | 453  |
| Bombay   | 51.9        | 18.7        | 70.6               | 17.4  | 12.0          | 363  |
| Bengal   | 37.19       | 5.72        | 42.91              | 40.78 | 16.31         | 398  |
| Assam    | 57.5        | 12.8        | 70.3               | 16.9  | 12.8          | 44   |

Table V shows that Govt. financed education in Bengal only to the extent of 37.19 per cent. Fees and other sources contributed more than twice as much in Bengal as in any other province. In Bengal public funds met less than half the cost of education. The comparatively small share of expenditure from public funds in Bengal might be partly accounted for by the large numbers of privately managed and unaided institutions and by the fact that Bengal had not as yet passed a Primary Education Act applicable to rural areas.

The expenditure in percentage on primary education in the provinces differed strikingly. This is evident from the following table.

TABLE—VI

| Province         | Percentage of expenditure |
|------------------|---------------------------|
| Madras           | 37.7                      |
| Bombay           | 52.0                      |
| Bengal           | 17.0                      |
| Bihar and Orissa | 31.5                      |

In Bengal the expenditure on primary education was very low. Bombay spent proportionately three times as much on primary education as Bengal.

TABLE—VII

Percentage of expenditure on primary schools  
from different sources.

| Province            | Govt.<br>funds | Board<br>funds | Municipal<br>funds | Fees  | Other<br>sources |
|---------------------|----------------|----------------|--------------------|-------|------------------|
| Madras              | 50.52          | 21.03          | 6.95               | 5.05  | 16.55            |
| Bombay              | 61.25          | 7.39           | 21.08              | 2.55  | 7.73             |
| Bengal              | 33.50          | 13.32          | 5.37               | 35.09 | 12.72            |
| Bihar and<br>Orissa | 2.72           | 58.70          | 4.50               | 18.51 | 15.57            |

Table VII indicates that in Bengal, Govt. contribution towards primary schools was very meagre in comparison with Madras and Bombay. In Bengal fees constituted the highest percentage of expenditure on primary schools in India.

TABLE—VIII

Percentage of total Govt. Expenditure on  
primary education.

| Province         | Primary schools |     |       |
|------------------|-----------------|-----|-------|
|                  |                 |     | Rs.   |
| Madras           | ...             | ... | 42.55 |
| Bombay           | ...             | ... | 61.23 |
| Bengal           | ...             | ... | 15.30 |
| Bihar and Orissa | ...             | ... | 2.10  |

From the above table it is clear that in Bengal, less than a sixth of the total Govt. expenditure went to primary education.<sup>10</sup> In 1927 in Bengal the average cost per boys' school was Rs. 148 and per girls' school was Rs. 75 only. The average annual cost in the Presidency in the same year per boys was Rs. 4.0 and per girl was Rs. 3.2. The responsibility of Govt. for mass education was regarded by the Hartog Committee as very great. But "from the figures for 1926-27 in

10. The Report of the Hartog Committee—Chap.-XIV, P. 262.



the provinces, we find that Bengal spends the smallest percentage on primary education, that the contribution made by public bodies to the total primary expenditure is the lowest in this province, that the expenditure per head of the population is lowest, the expenditure per school is the smallest, the expenditure per scholar is the least, the average fee the highest.'"<sup>11</sup>

The Layton Report pointed out, on the basis of the figures for the year 1928-1929, that the "disparity between the total expenditures per head in the various provinces, e.g., 2.5 rupees per head in Bengal compared to 8.6 rupees in Burma, 8.3 rupees in Bombay, 5.5 rupees in Punjab, and 4 rupees in Madras, was so great that it was 'impossible to believe'. As a matter of fact, Bengal came eighth in the list. Sir Walter Layton observed that the disparities were so great that their existence could not be left out of account. He further pointed out that increases in the nation-building services, such as Education, Medical Relief and Public Health, between 1922-23 and 1929-30 had been the least in Bengal as compared to the other major provinces.'"<sup>12</sup> This is regrettable. The inevitable result was the unsatisfactory and wretched condition of mass education in Bengal Presidency. After thirty-two years of independence we still feel the existence of the same tradition in West Bengal. Though education has been declared free upto Class VIII as per directive principle of state policy (Art. 45 of the Constitution) Govt's contribution towards mass education had till recently been negligible. The Hartog Committee, however, concluded that primary education should be national concern and the Imperial Govt. should not entirely withdraw from the field of educational finance. It should have played some part in it. For the sake of uniform educational development in the provinces the Imperial Govt. should have some control over the financing of education in the provinces. In Bengal by the

11. Eighth Quinquennial Review on the progress of Education in Bengal (1927-32)—Chap.—III.

12. The Modern Review—1936, Vol. 59.

**Notes**—The Report on Indian Finance by Sir Walter Layton included in the Report of the Indian Statutory Commission, Vol. II.



primary education Act of 1919 and the Scheme of Mr. E. E. Biss the local authorities (Municipalities and Union Boards) were authorised to levy an education cess which was not acceptable in general to the people. Money was no doubt essential, but even more essential was a well-directed policy carried out by effective and competent agencies, determined to eliminate waste of all kinds.

(12) The Mont-Ford Reforms made Education a Transferred subject. It was left to the control and responsibility of the Indian Ministers who were practically powerless to take any effective measure for educational advancement as finance remained in the Reserved List. That was no doubt an insurmountable hurdle to cross over. So the transfer of authority to Indian Ministers was really meaningless for all practical purposes. They were merely helpless spectators and acted as shadow of the real authority. This was the real paradox of the dyarchical arrangement. Continued political unrest and frequent changes in the tenure of office made their position very much insecure and unstable. Because of the shaky position of the Education Ministry, the Education Secretary and the Director of Public Instruction became the real and de-facto controlling and policy making authorities in the provinces particularly in Bengal.

The Hartog Committee was of opinion that the divorce of the Govt. of India from education had been unfortunate. It opined further that steps should be taken to consider anew the relation of the Central Govt. with the subject. The committee suggested that the Govt. of India should serve as a centre of educational information for the whole of India and as a means of coordinating the educational experience of the different provinces. Primary education was a subject of national importance and hence it should be the duty of Govt. to assume necessary powers of control and improve the efficiency of administration. The state, therefore, should not divest itself of its responsibility in the matter. The Minister should have definite responsibility to a Legislative Council which was the ultimate authority for sanctioning money. The committee, therefore, emphasised centralisation of educational authority. It was unable to accept the view that the



Govt. of India should be entirely relieved of all responsibility for the attainment of universal primary education. It might be that some of the provinces would be unable to provide the funds necessary for that purpose, and the Govt. of India should, therefore, be constitutionally empowered to make good such financial deficiencies in the interest of India as a whole.

The primary education Act of 1919 and the subsequent scheme of Mr. Biss gave the local authorities (Municipalities and Union Boards) immense responsibility and scope for providing mass education on a large scale. But the hopes were frustrated to a great extent. The Hartog Committee remarked and concluded by saying that the responsibilities of Ministers in the provinces had been reduced too much already by a devolution on local bodies which had taken the control of primary education to a large extent out of their hands, with unfortunate results. The devolution of authority in primary education to local bodies had been excessive, injudicious and premature. Hence the committee proposed further reconsideration and readjustment of the relations between provincial Govts. and local bodies.

#### **Criticism of the Hartog Committee's recommendations.**

The report of the Hartog Committee was the first official recognition of the neglect of primary education. It held Govt. responsible for the appalling illiteracy prevailing in the country. The main conclusion of the committee was that quantity had been gained at the cost of quality. It really meant a victory for the official view of qualitative reform which had dominated the scene between 1902 and 1926, and which had been set aside by the Indian Ministers between 1922-27. The alien Govt. favoured qualitative improvement while Indian nationalist opinion was in favour of quantitative expansion. The Report came as a triumph of the official view; for it attempted to show that a policy of expansion had proved ineffective and wasteful and that a policy of consolidation alone was suited to Indian conditions. Thus the Report was warmly received in official circles and came to dominate official thought throughout the period 1927-37. There was little progress of primary education between the period 1927-37.



The world-wide economic depression and political unrest in India particularly the civil disobedience movement accelerated the move and precipitated the crisis.

But the report received cold and hostile reception in the nationalist circles. It was under fire in the hands of nationalist leaders and surely not without reasons :

- (a) The Report implied a condemnation of the Indian Control of education because it virtually said that the policy of expansion adopted by Indian Ministers was ill-advised. Indian opinion could not accept this view. It was in favour of expansion and challenged unequivocally the official and imperialist viewpoint. Indian nationalist opinion upheld the view that a definite programme of expansion was urgently needed for the liquidation of illiteracy and mass education in the country.
- (b) The non-official view further was not in agreement with the opinion of the committee that quality must have prior claim over quantity. Indian opinion felt that the need of the situation was further expansion and the introduction of compulsory education to banish mass-scale illiteracy (92%) from the land.
- (c) The Indian opinion contradicted the validity of several of the conclusions arrived at by the committee. For instance, it was pointed out that the extent of wastage was greatly exaggerated by the Committee.

During diarchy the Indian Ministers in the provinces could not really command the support of the people. They had to rely too often on official support. The truly Indian view remained outside Govt. and choose to work outside the official system rather than inside it. Consequently, inspite of the official transfer of education to Indian control under the Mont-Ford Reforms, the bureaucratic and the nationalist views still continued to oppose each other. The conflict came really to an end only as late as in 1937 when Provincial Autonomy was introduced, and the Congress assumed office in seven provinces of India including Bengal.



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE BENGAL (RURAL) PRIMARY EDUCATION ACT OF 1930—A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OF UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION IN RURAL BENGAL

Background : The Primary Education Act of 1919 was very much limited in its scope. Its application was mainly confined to the urban areas. An amendment was made to the Act in 1921 to extend its provision to Union Committees. Mr. Biss patronised the newly formed Union Boards in his cherished scheme for the development and control of primary education in rural areas. But both the attempts proved infructuous and lagged far behind the desired goal. The causes of this unsatisfactory position of primary education in the rural areas are not far to seek. The financial position of the Union Boards was very precarious. They were reluctant and had no authority to introduce coercive measures for compulsion and for levying an education cess to augment their resources. Their position was uncertain as to the relation with the District Boards and the provincial Govt. Provision of funds was left to the option of the local bodies. The Municipalities were reluctant to find even half the necessary funds. Primary education consequently made little headway in any town or Union except Chittagong and Calcutta.

Bengal was principally a land of villages and more than 90 per cent of her population lived in rural areas and had to procure their means of subsistence from agriculture. Hence to improve the condition of this huge rural folk, spread of mass education was an urgent and immediate need. Any real progress of Bengal meant the change of the lot of these dumb and teeming millions, 92 per cent of whom were illiterate and plunged into darkness of ignorance. The only way to enlighten these ignorant masses was to spread elementary education on a large scale in the rural areas. The widespread and ever increasing political unrest in the country and the need for an enlightened and responsible electorate also necessitated a comprehensive scheme for mass education in the villages



of Bengal Presidency. The Act of 1930 was such a comprehensive plan for primary education in rural Bengal and it was surely an attempt in the right direction. With a view to removing the defects in the Primary Education Act, 1919 and improving the pay of primary school teachers, a comprehensive Primary Education Bill for rural areas in Bengal was passed in 1930. This bill hang fire for four years from 1926. It moved through various stages and phases and was ultimately passed by the Bengal Legislative Council on the 26th August, 1930.

Passage of the Act : It has already been mentioned that the Bengal Primary Education Act of 1919 was amended in 1921 to permit of its application to Unions constituted under the Bengal Village Self-Govt. Act of 1919, authorising the Union Boards to exercise and perform all or any of the powers and duties conferred on the Municipal Commissioners by the Primary Education Act, subject to such control by the District or Local Boards as the Govt. of Bengal might prescribe. But this Act practically remained a dead letter on the Statute Book so far as rural areas were concerned. Several authorities felt that the initiative in the matter of compulsion ought to come from the Provincial Government. The question was discussed by the Govt. in 1926, and a Resolution embodying the Education Department's proposals to levy an education cess and to constitute special district school boards for the administration of primary education, was published in September, 1926.<sup>1</sup>

As a result of conferences held at various places and the views received from the District Officers, Mr. Lindsey (Secretary to the Govt. of Bengal, Education Department) drew up a draft of the Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Bill in 1927. But before the Bill was introduced in the Council the whole Ministry fell on a motion of no-confidence in them. (Mr. B. Chakraborty was then the Hon'ble Minister-in-Charge of Education).

Mr. Musharruf Hossain became Minister of Education in October, 1927. The Director of Public Instruction in April,

<sup>1</sup> The History of Elementary Education in India—J. M. Sen, Chap. VI. pp. 216-17.



1928, issued a circular to all inspecting officers of the Education Department and requested them to explain, in the course of their tours, to the educated members of the public, the main features of the Bill including the necessity for levying a cess on land for the improvement and expansion of primary education in the rural areas of Bengal.

Thousands of copies of leaflets were distributed in rural areas of the province in support of the Bill. Hundreds of meetings were held all over the province and the response was remarkable. The Bill met with cordial approval from the cultivating class and primary school teachers.

In August 1928, Nawab Musharruf Hossain introduced the Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Bill, 1928 in the Legislative Council, which referred it to a Select Committee of 32 members. The Bill evoked some amount of criticism as to its scope, the constitution of the proposed School Boards and the principle of taxation proposed. The report of the Select Committee was published in March, 1929 and presented to the Council for consideration. But a no-confidence motion against Nawab Musharruf Hossain was carried in the Legislative Council in February, 1929 and the Bill was automatically dropped.

The Bill, as it emerged from the first Select Committee of 1928, was introduced in the Council in August, 1929, and aroused some opposition. The 1929-Bill was again referred to a Select Committee consisting of 45 members. Their report was published in January, 1930. The Bengal Primary Education Bill, 1929, as reported on by the Second Select Committee, was subsequently withdrawn by Govt. after considerable discussion in the Council in March, 1930, as the second Select Committee made radical changes that Government was unable to accept.<sup>2</sup> Changes were proposed mainly in the matter of the extreme official and undemocratic (powers of the D. M. and Sub-Divisional Magistrates were excessive) character of the proposed School Boards and the heavy amount of cess proposed to be collected from the cultivating raiyats.<sup>3</sup> The

2. Eighth Quinquennial Review on the Progress of Education in Bengal (1927-32)—Chap. III.

3. File No. Edu. IB.24/1919, Oct., 1930, Progs. Nos. 2-6. The Report of the Select Committee on the Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Bill, 1929, Chaps III and IV.



Hon'ble Minister, while moving for the withdrawal of the Bill, also promised to introduce a new Bill, which was published in the Calcutta Gazette of the 10th April, 1930. This Bill was practically in the same line with the report of the First Select Committee of 1928. The most important modification was in the ratio of the cess. In the report of the 1st Select Committee the ratio of the cess was 3 pice in the rupee for the tenants and 2 pice in the rupee for the zamindars. The Bill provided that the ratio should be  $1\frac{1}{2}$  pice for the landlords and  $3\frac{1}{2}$  pice for the tenants. The modification was thus only in the interest of the zamindars. It was natural for the landlord Minister to safeguard the interest of the fellow zamindars. The Second Select Committee proposed that the ratio should be 2 pice for the zamindars and 2 pice for the tenants. Government held the view that the fair ratio was 4 pice for the tenants and 1 pice for the zamindars. This was surely unjustified and undemocratic. The Government view was nakedly influenced by the Hon'ble Education Minister who himself was a Zamindar. Thus the Govt. indirectly tried to guard the interests of the zamindars which was protested to in every nook and corner of the Presidency and hence a compromise was reached between the opinions of the Select Committees and the opinion of the Government.<sup>4</sup>

In July, 1929, the Hon'ble Minister went out into the country to explain the main features of the Bill to all classes of people and to seek their support and ensure their mandate in this respect to their representatives in the Bengal Legislative Council. He toured through the districts of Chittagong, Noakhali, Faridpur, Jessore, Bakerganj, Dacca and Mymensingh. His tour had the effect of rousing the country to what Mr. Fazlul Huq described in the Council on the 4th August, 1930, as "fever heat".

On the 13th August, 1930, the Hon'ble Minister intro-

**Notes**—The Second Select Committee was dominated by the Swarajist members of the Legislative Council.

4. Introductory speech on the Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Bill, 1930, made on the floor of the Legislative Council by the Hon'ble Minister of Education, Mr. K. Nazimuddin.



duced the 1930-Bill and moved that the Bill be taken into consideration. The Council sat on the 25th and 26th August, even in the absence of the majority of the Hindu Members, who were opposed to the Bill for obvious reasons, to consider the Bill, clause by clause, and passed it on the 26th August, 1930. The assent of the Governor General was received on the 10th January, 1931.

In introducing the Bill Mr. K. Nazimuddin explained eloquently the main objects and reasons behind the proposed Act. In brief these are :—

- (1) to provide a central authority for each district, called the District School Board, to expand, manage and control primary education effectively ;
- (2) to raise the funds necessary for the gradual establishment of universal primary education by imposition of a cess ;
- (3) to provide for compulsory attendance in schools ;
- (4) to abolish the system of realisation of fees in the primary schools of any area where primary education has been declared compulsory.

The main provisions of the Act (Bengal Act VII of 1930) are summarised below :

#### **Preamble :**

The Preamble says that the Act intended to make better provision for the progressive expansion and for the management and control of primary education in rural areas in Bengal, so as to make it available to all children and with a view to making it compulsory within ten years. It extended to the whole of Bengal, except the city of Calcutta and other municipal areas. Hence the Act was intended for rural areas only, and all children who were not less than six and not more than eleven years of age or other prescribed age would come within its scope when it was enforced.

- (1) Chapter II of the Act deals with the formation and functions of the Central Primary Education Committee. Clause 3 of the Act provided for the establishment of such a committee to advise the Local Govt. on all matters which might be or were referred to it under this Act.



### **Constitution of the Central Primary Education Committee :**

Clause 4 of the Act of 1930 provided the manner of constitution of the Central Primary Education Committee. The Committee should consist of the following members, viz. :—

- (a) the Director of Public Instruction, Bengal, ex-officio ;
- (b) ten members of whom two should be elected in the prescribed manner from each of the five divisions of the province by the members of the District School Boards of each division, one to be a Muhammadan and the other a Hindu ;
- (c) five members to be appointed by the Local Govt., of whom two should be representatives of the depressed classes and three should be persons possessing experience in educational matters. Thus the constitution specified in clause 4 provided for a non-official majority.

### **Functions of the Committee :**

Clause 5 of the Act enumerates the functions of the Central Primary Education Committee, which should constitute all questions affecting control over the District School Board, supersession of the Board, delegation of the Board's powers to Union Boards, Union Committees and Panchayats, notification regarding the introduction of compulsory education, curricula and syllabuses of studies to be prescribed for rural primary schools and conditions framed under the Act. Besides the items mentioned above the Bengal Govt. could refer any other matter affecting Primary Education in rural areas to the Central Primary Education Committee for their opinion.

Clause 6 of the Act of 1930 created in each district a controlling body, viz., the District School Board. Subject to conditions prescribed by Govt. the District School Board had full power to manage, maintain and give grants-in-aid to all primary schools within its administrative jurisdiction.

### **Constitution of the Board :**

The District School Board consisted of :—

- A) *Officials* (Ex-officio)—(a) the District Magistrate for



- the first eight years ; (b) the Sub-Divisional Magistrates ; (c) the District Inspector of Schools ;
- B) *Non-Officials* (Ex-officio)—(a) the Chairmen of the Local Boards ; (b) the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the District Board ;
- C) *Non-Officials* (Elected)—(a) as many members as there were sub-divisions in the district elected by the members of the District Board : provided that the number should in no case be less than two ; (b) one member from each sub-division should be elected by the members of the Union Boards, Union Committees and Panchayats within the sub-division ; provided that the number should in no case be less than two ; (c) one teacher of a primary school elected by the teachers of primary schools ; provided that for the first four years he should be appointed by the Government.
- D) *Non-Officials* (Nominated)—(d) as many members as there were sub-divisions in the district appointed by the Local Government : provided that the number should in no case be less than two.

**Functions and duties of the Board :**

The majority of the members of the District School Board were thus non-officials. Every Board should be a body corporate and should do all things necessary for the purposes of this Act. Subject to conditions prescribed by the Govt. of Bengal, every District School Board should prepare schemes for the extension of primary education, maintain all primary schools under public management in the district, appoint and fix and pay the salaries of teachers in all primary schools, grant recognition to schools, make grants to schools under private management, make grants for scholarships and stipends for primary schools, grant pensions and gratuities to teachers in primary schools, and form and manage a provident fund or annuity fund for teachers in primary schools.<sup>5</sup> If ordered by the Govt. the District School Board should delegate all or any of its powers of construction, repair, supervision and manage-

5. Clause 23 of Bengal Act VII of 1930.



ment of primary schools to Union Boards, Union Committees or Panchayats (clause-50).

**Cess and Tax for Primary Education :**

The greatest difficulty in connection with the advance of primary education had been the want of funds. Chapter IV of the Act proposed to provide this by the levy of a Primary Education Cess similar to the Roads and Public Works Cesses. The education cess would be at the rate of five pice in the rupee, of which the cultivator would pay three and a half pice and the landlord one and a half pice. (Thus the ratio was absolutely advantageous for the landlord as we have observed earlier). As the cess did not touch those whose income was derived from trade, business or profession a special section empowered each District Magistrate to assess a tax upon persons whose income were derived from sources other than the cultivation of land. The cess realised from a district should be spent solely for the promotion of primary education of the same district.<sup>6</sup>

**District Primary Education Fund ;**

Clause 36 of Chapter V of the Act of 1930 provided the formation of a District Primary Education Fund to meet the expenditure for primary education in each district. The fund should be credited with :—

- (i) all sums granted by the Local Govt. for primary education ;
- (ii) all sums granted by the Local Govt. for the maintenance of primary schools and for the payment of teachers in primary schools ;
- (iii) all sums granted by the Local Govt. for scholarships for children in primary schools ;
- (iv) the proceeds of the primary education cess levied in the district ;
- (v) the proceeds of the tax imposed under Clause 34 ;
- (vi) all income derived from endowments owned or managed by the Board ;
- (vii) the amount of all fines and penalties imposed under the Act ;

6. Clauses 29-34 of Bengal Act VII of 1930.



- (viii) all sums received by certification under Clause 48 ;
- (ix) all school fees, if any, collected in primary schools maintained by the Board ; and
- (x) all other sums of money received by the Board for the purposes of this Act.

#### **Compulsory Education :**

Chapter IX of the Act of 1930 (Clauses 55-62) provided for Compulsory Education. The Local Govt. after consulting the District School Board might declare that primary education should be compulsory within a specified area (Clause 55). No fee should be charged by any primary school under public management in any area in which primary education had been declared compulsory, and also from the time provisions of the Act had been extended and cess imposed in the area, even if primary education was not declared compulsory (Clause-56). Only for well defined reasons exemptions to children from compulsory attendance at a primary school would be granted by the District School Board (Clause-59).

In response to a widely expressed public demand, provision in the Act was made for the imparting of religious instruction, if possible, during school hours (Chap.-X, Clause-63).†

A set of rules was also framed under the Act. The rules laid down the method, manner and procedure for implementing the different provisions of the Act. The list below mentions some of the items covered by the rules :

- (1) Constitution and work of the District School Boards,
- (2) Manner of preparing schemes for extension of primary education,
- (3) Opening of additional primary schools and expansion of existing ones,
- (4) Appointment of teachers and payment of their salaries,
- (5) Condition for grants and recognition to schools,
- (6) Form of application for grant-in-aid,
- (7) Attendance Committees for Primary Schools.

† Notes—The Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Act of 1930 included 66 Clauses altogether.



According to Rules each Primary School should serve an area of 3.14 sq. miles, i.e., a circle with a radius of one mile. The Rules also recommended only day-time classes.

On the 21st August, 1930, the Hon'ble Minister of Education declared in the Legislative Council that the total annual contributions by the holders of estates and holders of tenures would be Rs. 28,67,000 approximately, and the total annual contribution by the cultivating raiyats would be Rs. 83,08,000 approximately.<sup>7</sup> The Local Govt. agreed to provide as its contribution every year a sum of Rs. 23,50,000 for expenditure on primary education. The whole of the expenditure required on account of the training of teachers should be met from provincial revenues and not from the Govt. resources provided by the new taxation or from the Govt. grant mentioned above. The whole cost of the inspecting staff should also be met from provincial revenues and not from the District Primary Education Fund. The total cost of putting the Act of 1930 into full operation was calculated at Rs. 3,76.65,000. Against this sum the estimated income from cess, taxation, and Govt. contribution was about Rs. 1,35,25,000 per year.<sup>8</sup> Thus the inadequate finance held the full functioning of the Act back.

#### Application of the Act of 1930 :

It is evident from the provisions of the Act mentioned above that "the Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Act, 1930 provided for the establishment of District School Boards as the Central authority for primary education in each district, and afforded the machinery for the eventful development of free and compulsory primary education throughout the province. For its financing, the scheme depended in the main upon the imposition of a primary education cess, and it was a matter of regret that owing to the prevailing depression it had not been found possible to impose additional taxation on the rural population."<sup>9</sup> The District School Board would

7. Proceedings of the Bengal Legislative Council, Vol.—XXXV (August 1930) p. 600
8. Eighth Quinquennial Review on the Progress of Education in Bengal (1927-32), Chap. III.
9. Eighth Quinquennial Review on the Progress of Education in Bengal (1927-32)—Introductory Chapter.



exercise all the powers which were hitherto vested in the District Board regarding the control and management of primary education. It would also shoulder all the liabilities of the District Board in respect of developing and financing of education.

"Unfavourable conditions, political and financial, had checked the progress and expansion of educational activities. Communal dissension, political agitation, and economic depression all had their most unfortunate effects on the developmental policy"<sup>10</sup> The civil disobedience movement and the terrorist campaign affected education in all directions. Drastic retrenchments were effected in the Department of Education including the closure of certain educational institutions as per recommendations made by the Bengal Retrenchment Committee of 1932.

"The year 1930 unfortunately almost synchronised with the extra-ordinary economic depression which swept over the entire province, and which made impossible the introduction of the Act, which almost remained a dead letter."<sup>11</sup> Consequently the cess contemplated in the Act which was the backbone of the scheme could not be imposed. But valuable preliminary or spade-work was done in the districts to facilitate the work of the District School Boards when these were to be created. The most important part of this work was a result of a circular issued by the D.P.I. in Sept., 1930 instructing Sub-Inspectors of Schools to make an intensive education survey of their respective areas and decide upon the places where such primary schools as were needed, would be located.

In spite of the acute financial and economic distress through which the country was passing, the years following the passing of Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Act of 1930 witnessed slow but steady progress of educational work. As a move towards eventual enforcement of the Act "the optional scheme" was devised. This optional scheme was worked out by Dr. W. A. Jenkins, special officer for

10. Ibid.

11. Ninth Quinquennial Review on the Progress of Education in Bengal (1932-37)—Chap. III.



primary education in 1933 for Bengal. The scheme came into operation from 1st April, 1934. The genesis of the scheme may be stated here in brief :

The cost of the scheme was based on the calculation of a three-teacher school run at an average cost of Rs. 13 per head per year and providing for 90 boys. This estimate of Rs. 13 per head provided one head-master on Rs. 25- $\frac{1}{2}$ -30, two teachers on Rs. 20- $\frac{1}{2}$ -25 each, repairs and contingency Rs. 112, and books for children Rs. 1-8 to Rs. 2 per head per year.

### Scheme III

Universal and free primary education for all boys and girls from the age 6 to 9 (4 years).

Cost on the double-shift system                      2 crores, 83 lakhs

Cost for separate facilities for girls              5 crores, 17 lakhs†

The figures given above included urban areas which were excluded from the sphere of the Primary Education Act, 1930. Actually only 7 per cent of the population lived in urban areas. The cost of the third scheme must, therefore, be reduced by 7 per cent for rural areas. The ultimate cost, therefore, for providing primary education in rural areas would be not Rs. 13 per head but Rs. 1,000 per annum for 90 boys. Hence the cost of the scheme for rural areas was calculated at Rs. 2 crores and 24 lakhs for boys and 1 crore 86 lakhs for girls or 2 crores 24 lakhs on the double-shift system and 4 crores 10 lakhs for separate facilities. Govt. intended to stick to the double-shift system. No doubt this was feasible from practical point of view but very far from the ideal. The double-shift was an extremely undesirable one, disliked in many sections of the province and unjustifiable educationally. Resort should be made to it only as a temporary expedient. At the first possible opportunity separate facilities would have to be provided.<sup>12</sup> It was anticipated that if the Primary Education cess was levied, there would be an

12. Notes on Primary Education Scheme by Dr. W. A. Jenkins—  
File No. 3P.8 (1)-B, Feb., 1935, Progs. No. 406B.

†Notes :—Dr. Jenkins prepared three schemes—(a) for children between 6-14, (b) 6-11 and (c) 6-9. The Govt. approved the last one as convenient from financial and practical points of view.



annual income from the cess of Rs. 1 crore 11 lakhs 75 thousand. The existing Govt. contribution as stated earlier was only 23½ lakhs towards rural primary education. Hence even the double-shift scheme demanded much increase of the Govt. contribution to Rs. 1 crore 12 lakhs for rural areas with an additional provision of urban areas. Provision for separate facilities meant doubling the entire increased contribution both on provincial and local basis. Dr. W. A. Jenkins in his Note remarked that there was no reason why Govt. should not take a long-sighted view of the educational needs and developments of the province and pledge itself to an increasing scale of expenditure until this amount was reached. So, for the proper implementation of the Act of 1930, a very much enhanced contribution from the Provincial Govt. was necessary and highly desirable as Bengal Govt's contribution at the time was the smallest in India. This is evident from the following scale of expenditure :—

Madras—Govt. contribution was not less than 50 per cent.

Bombay—Govt. contribution in the rural areas was 66⅔ per cent.

Punjab—On an average not less than 66⅔ per cent.

United Provinces—Govt. contribution was 60 per cent.

Bihar and Orissa—It was 66⅔ per cent where compulsion was introduced.

Assam—Govt. contribution was ⅔ of the cost of any compulsory scheme.

Even in England this contribution was not less than 50 per cent. In Bengal, Govt. (Provincial and Central Govt. together) should contribute at least half of the total amount necessary for financing and scheme.<sup>13</sup>

Thus the Act could not be enforced in its original form immediately but in mutilated fashion. Some of the provisions of the Act were enforced by the Education Department. Under the optional scheme, District School Boards, as contemplated in the Act, were set up in those districts in which the district boards agreed to hand over the control of primary schools and the sum spent by them for primary education to the District School Boards. The Government grants for



primary education in those areas were also made over to the District School Boards. In accordance with the scheme outlined above, District School Boards were set up in the districts of Birbhum, Bogra, Dinajpur, Pabna, Mymensingh, Noakhali and Chittagong with effect from 1st April, 1934, at Dacca with effect from 1st Sept., 1934 and from 1st March, 1935 at Nadia and Murshidabad; in 1936 School Boards were also established in Rangpur and Jalpaiguri.<sup>14</sup> Thus the number of districts participating in the optional scheme was twelve and in course of time it rose to sixteen out of 28 districts including Calcutta. The amount of the contribution of the District Boards and the amount to be contributed by Govt. were fixed on the average of the actual expenditure of the preceding four years. But as this period coincided with the period of greatest financial stringency, when expenditure was cut down to the lowest possible limit, additional funds were not always available for primary education. Some District School Boards, like Nadia, had actually less money than what the District Boards spent in the year immediately preceding the formation of the District School Boards.

Government, however, agreed to make necessary advances and to recoup them later on when the proceeds of the cess were credited to the District Primary Education Fund. Govt. had also promised that all sums, which they had so far been spending on primary education in rural areas in a district, would be handed over to the District School Board in the shape of a lump grant.

The "District School Boards" relieved the District Boards of their educational work. These District School Boards constituted on a wider basis of representation, had brought the authorities concerned with mass education in rural areas in direct touch with the problems of primary education. This enabled them to take effective measures for the expansion of primary education in their respective areas when the Act was in full operation including the imposition of an education cess.<sup>15</sup> The Districts were to be congratulated for their ini-

14. Reports on Public Instruction in Bengal—1933-34, 1934-35—  
Chap. I.

15. Report on Public Instruction in Bengal (1934-35)—Chap. I.



tiative, farsightedness and wisdom. The initial experiences gained by these purely educational boards were of great use in years to follow. The District School Boards had a tremendously difficult task to perform, viz., consolidation of the existing schools and the starting of new ones on sound basis. As the Act had given them enough powers, it was hoped that they would be able to achieve considerable progress in future. Government continued to watch their working and supervise their activities directed towards an early attainment of the goal which it had set before them, viz. compulsory universal primary education in the province. But as time went on it was proved beyond doubt that the Act failed to achieve the expected goal and the inevitable result was that the appalling illiteracy among the masses continued till date. This unfortunate situation again led to the passing of the Acts of primary education in 1963 and 1973 even after many years of independence.

#### **Evaluation of the Act :**

The limited applicability and proved ineffectiveness of the Act of 1930 was under fire in different sections of the society. The imposition of a cess and proposal for taxation for making primary education free and compulsory in the rural areas of Bengal were severely criticised in different meetings, conferences, periodicals and newspapers of the time. The pivot of controversy chiefly centred round the educational cess of five pice per rupee on the annual value of lands and the constitution of the District School Boards as the chief controlling agencies of primary education in the rural areas.

- (1) The division or apportionment of the cess was inequitable. The ratio of cess was fixed at  $3\frac{1}{2}$  pice for the raiyats and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  pice for the zamindars. This was no doubt unreasonable and as such the cultivators at large were hostile to it. Bengal was pre-eminently an agricultural province. Thus the clause relating to education cess contained the germs of future discontent among the millions of raiyats of Bengal who formed the bulk of the tax-paying community. The Act dissatisfied the groaning multitude of Bengal and



tended to frustrate all nation-building activities including education.

It was argued that the raiyats should pay more because the cess would be spent for their benefit. But the then economic condition of Bengal did not favour the imposition of any fresh taxation on the masses who were already groaning under heavy taxation and pecuniary liabilities. The Bengal cultivators were proverbially poor. The vast majority of them lived on one scanty meal a day. The country was not making any headway economically. The years following the passing of the Primary Education Act of 1930 faced countrywide economic depression. The inevitable result was the fall of prices of different agricultural goods. Jute prices fell incredibly. This created a havoc in the villages of Bengal and hard hit the economic position of the millions of jute growers or cultivators of the province. Apart from this they were heavily indebted. Many of them had to pay a high rate of interest. Thus the cultivators of Bengal were almost on the verge of ruin. They were incapable of procuring even two meals a day. They were dead against any new and additional taxation. The high rate of cess crippled their backbone. If the poor people were required to pay for their education the term "free primary education" was a misnomer. The Hon'ble Minister's plea was that the majority of raiyats were in favour of paying the education cess. But this was far from the truth. Generally the people were reluctant to pay anything more beyond their day-to-day items of expenditure even if it was intended for their own benefit.

- (2) The Hon'ble Minister himself was a zamindar. He wanted to safeguard the interests of the zamindars on the flimsy pretext of Permanent Settlement. It was argued that the proposal of imposing 1½ pice cess was a direct encroachment on the rights of the zamindars. It was argued further on their behalf that the zamindars would have to take the trouble of collecting



cesses from the raiyats. The Hon'ble Minister pleaded that out of 50 lakh tenure-holders over 48 lakhs were very poor. But these arguments were not tenable and were far from the truth. The plea of permanent settlement in favour of the zamindars was contradicted because the raiyats were not a party to the agreement. They were not even benefitted by it. The settlement was reached to the mutual understanding and benefit of the zamindars and the Govt. of India. Apart from that the rent payable to the Govt. by the zamindars was permanently settled but the zamindars increased their income immensely by means of illegal exactions (abwabs, fines etc.) from the tenants, which were far more than the legal rents. Hence the demand to pay some fair amount of money for the education of the raiyats was not an unreasonable one. Rather the major burden of the educational cess should be borne by the zamindars and not the raiyats. An additional taxation should be levied only on the rich and well-to-do, if primary education were to be made free and compulsory.

- (3) The main causes that brought about the present state of affairs in Bengal was the lack of financial assistance from Govt. for the purpose of education. If sufficient funds were available, a great deal could have been done. The only cry of the Govt. was "lack of money" in every department. "Everywhere the official objection is the lack of money. It is very unfortunate that money loses its solidity and becomes volatile and evaporable in the Indian public treasury in the presence of a warm desire in the Indian mind for education".<sup>16†</sup> "State-help for education in India is meagre compared with that in other progressive countries of the world. It is also out of proportion to the contributions made by private non-official

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16. The Modern Review, Oct., 1927.

†Notes : The question of inadequate financial assistance was an old one. It was discussed widely and subjected to severe criticism in different quarters even before the passing of the Act of 1930.



agencies in India.”<sup>17</sup> Govt. was not at all eager to solve any problem in the field of primary education. It was not prepared to provide the money requisite. People really suspected the earnestness of Govt. in the matter of educational reform.

“As regards the expenditure on primary education the record of Bengal was too bad indeed. In this regard she lagged behind other provinces (Madras, Bombay, U. P. and Punjab). There had been hardly any real improvements in Bengal in the position as regards literacy during the last decade and a half when the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms had been in action. This single fact proves that the so-called reforms were an unmitigated failure at least in this province.”<sup>18</sup> Govt’s contribution to primary education was very meagre. It was limited to only Rs. 23 lakhs 50 thousand. In all the provinces in India Govt. contribution was more than 50 per cent. In Bengal private contribution was the highest, Govt. contribution was the lowest. Even in England Govt. contribution towards primary education was more than 50 per cent. (Dr. W. A. Jenkins’ Note on Primary Education).

Hartog Committee also pointed out this fact. It held Govt. responsible for the appalling illiteracy prevailing in the country. Govt. should at least bear the burden of one half of the expenditure. But the motion of Mr. Bijoy Prosad Singha Roy in the Bengal Legislative Council in this regard was lost.

- (4) It is the duty of every civilized nation or state to provide elementary education to the masses free of charge. Curiously enough the foreign Govt. instead of increasing its own percentage of expenditure on mass education, was constantly trying to divest itself of its primary responsibility. That was not only re-

17. The Calcutta Review (1936)—Vol. 58, (January-March)—“Educational Reconstructon”—An article read by Shyamaprosad Mukherjee, Vice-Chancellor, Calcutta University in the Conference of the All-India Federation of Educational Associations.

18. The Mussalman (Calcutta) of the 23rd Aug., 1934.



grettable but hypocritical on the part of the alien ruler. The Indian Ministers in this regard were mere puppets in the hands of their alien bureaucratic masters. They simply gave ditto to them. The Ministers were not true representatives of the people because of limited franchise. They also belonged to the upper class of the society. They had no real sympathy for the people at large and simply were shedding crocodile tears for the removal of illiteracy from this dark corner of the sub-continent. Here lay the greatest flaw of the dyarchical arrangement. The Govt. was increasing its expenditure on police administration to face the rising national upsurge whereas it was curtailing its educational budget. "Bengal had a deficit budget of Rs. 2,10,94,000 for 1931-32 and a deficit budget of Rs. 1,63,00,000 for 1932-33. In spite of Bengal's financial stringency Rs. 2,20,70,000 had been provided in the 1932-33 budget for the police. This was the highest allotment, that for General Administration, Rs. 1,18,79,000, coming next. But there was only Rs. 1,17,42,000 allotted for Education. The largest sum had to be spent for the police and so little was spent for education. Thus education was starved for the sake of oppressive machinery like the police."<sup>19</sup>

"The perennial plea of scarcity of funds has been trotted out under a decent cover of meandering verbiage. Money might be found for the police, the paharawallas, but the students must suffer at schools because of want of money".<sup>20</sup>

"Probably no other civilized Govt. on the face of the earth except the bureaucratic Govt. of India could have openly declared that funds were not available for primary education".<sup>21</sup>† Primary education should be one of the first charges on the revenue of any civilized country. The Govt. should be prepared to bear

19. The Modern Review, March, 1932, Vol. 51, p. 347.

20. The Students' World (Cal.) of the 16th Feb., 1930.

21. The Jyoti (Chittagong) of the 2nd Aug. 1928.



the brunt of the expense. Money ought to be found by curtailing expenditure on other heads of Govt. The extra cost of developing primary education should be met by curtailment of expenditure through retrenchment, from export duty on jute, by levying indirect taxation. The Education Department was top heavy. "The funds must come from the Govt. and the rich. The income tax realized from the rich of the country and the export duty on jute, the main agricultural product of the province, which also was the fruit of the hard labour of the cultivators should be utilised for the improvement of the sanitary condition of the poor villagers and the introduction of free primary education among them."<sup>22</sup>++ There was no guarantee in the Act of 1930 that the Govt. would contribute a portion of the cost for the implementation of the Act. It was simply a pious wish. There was no statutory obligation on the part of the Govt. to bear a fair share of the cost. The minimum should be at least 50 per cent. The public paid two-thirds of the educational expenditure but the Govt. paid only one-third.

- (5) Gross financial injustice had been committed to Bengal by the Meston Award. Custom duty from jute amounting to Rs. 3 crores 75 lakhs in the year 1931 was entirely appropriated by the Govt. of India. The total cost of putting the Act into full operation had been calculated to Rs. 3,76,65,000. The axe of Meston Award gave a death-blow to the financial position of Bengal Presidency. Bengal was robbed and cheated by the Meston Award. According to the Census of 1921 there were 73,42,558 boys and girls of the age

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+Notes : The plea of inadequate finance was in existence even before the passing of the Act of 1930. It was an incurable disease in the body politic.

22. Resolution of the District Muslim Association, Dacca, 1928, Paper No. 2, p. 13.

++Notes : The question of financing primary education was discussed seriously in different public organisations even before the passing of the Act of 1930. It was a burning question of the time.



5 to 10. The cost of educating a child in a primary school in Bengal was on an average only Rs. 3-12-5 per annum. The cost of maintaining a primary school in Bengal was on average only Rs. 122-6-5 per annum. This was very much smaller than the all-India average. It was a disgrace that so little per head was spent for primary education in Bengal. Bengal was the most populous of the major provinces in India. She was the highest revenue-yielding province in India. Yet Bengal was allowed the smallest sum of money for its expenses. The estimated expenditure of Rs. 3 crores 76 lakhs for free and universal primary education was not extravagant. The want of funds was only a lame pretext. It was only white washing of the real motive of the foreign imperialist rulers. It was invented to hoodwink the nationalist thinkers. If the Bengal Govt. was allowed to retain the entire proceeds from jute duty, which was absolutely an agricultural product of the province, there would be no lack of funds for introducing free and compulsory primary education in Bengal. The Govt. of India should set free even the entire proceeds from export duty on jute for the enlightenment of the poor villagers of Bengal. Provincialisation of jute revenue was a legitimate and modest demand of the people of Bengal as it was derived from purely agricultural product which was a special growth of Bengal. The Central Govt. should have modified the inequitous "Meston Award" and make over at least one crore of rupees to improve the moral and material condition of the people of Bengal.

- (6) There was wide-spread apprehension that money collected from education cess might not be used for primary education. It was laid down in Clause 38 of the Act that money collected from cess would not be diverted to any other purpose other than that of primary education. But this clause was honoured more in breach than in observance. This also happened in the past very often. Money collected for Famine Insurance Fund was diverted to some other purposes.



This was exactly the same with the Road and Public Works Cesses. Before the public could be expected to agree to a new taxation, it must be fully guaranteed to them that its proceeds would not be diverted to any other purpose for which it was not meant.

- (7) The constitution of the District School Board was vehemently criticised as too official and dominated by henchmen of the Govt. The official control was regarded as too much and unnecessary. Public opinion could not accept official control over primary education. The Act of 1930 practically led to the officialisation of primary education. District Magistrate was the ex-officio head of the District School Board. Most of the members were non-official yes-men. "The District School Board was a body composed entirely of officials and their creatures, for nominated members usually sang to the tune of those to whom they owed their position and prestige. The 1929-bill was withdrawn by the Hon'ble Minister because his main objection was "the transfer of all control over primary education from Govt. and the Legislative Council to a Central executive body composed mainly of non-officials."<sup>23</sup> The teachers had no place in the determination of primary education policy in the district. The ultimate authority was with the Govt. officials who had no or little practical experience of the educational problems of the country. There was very little elective element in the Act. The raiyats had no direct control over the District School Board. This was objectionable because those who paid the piper should have a right to call the tune. It had no place for the educationists and men of light and leading of the district. It thus lacked representative character and educational experts whose practical experience was surely an asset to any developmental programme of education. The District Magistrate or the Sub-Divisional officers had little or nothing to do with any practical problem of education. This was also

23. The Liberty (Cal.) of the 2nd April, 1930.



true with regard to many ex-officio and nominated members of the District School Board. Their main function was political hob-nobbing. The proposed District School Board was an example of political trickery in the sphere of education. So the very constitution of the District School Board was retrograde and reactionary. For all practical intents and purposes it was an official body and as such it was hopelessly disappointing and unsatisfactory. It had a demoralising effect on primary education in the long run. The object of primary education was frustrated as the administrative functions were left entirely in the hands of Govt. officers. Under the Act of 1930 the Govt. enjoyed full control over the formation of syllabus for primary education and on expenditure for it. The syllabus, the curricula, the text books, the methods might be dictated by the Govt. The policy of over-officialisation and centralisation should be resisted.

- (8) The provision of compulsion in the Act was only a paper compulsion. Introduction of compulsion was left to the discretion of the District School Boards. It was not obligatory on their part to introduce compulsion without which the aim of universal literacy was an impossibility. Sir Bijay Prosad Singharoy, a member of the Council, and others strongly pleaded for making primary education compulsory immediately. There was general lethargy and apathy amongst certain classes of people to send their children to schools. So the enforcement of compulsion was inevitable.
- (9) The Act was further criticised on the ground that it was limited to rural areas only. This criticism, of course, had little force because the majority of the population lived in the rural areas. Only 7 per cent of them lived in urban areas. Apart from that, the Primary Education (Urban) Act of 1919 was already in operation. However the Act of 1930 should have been extended to urban areas except the cities of



Calcutta and Dacca. Other urban areas were practically rural areas.

- (10) The application of the Act was limited to 16 districts only on the basis of optional scheme. Percentage of literacy no doubt increased but that was negligible in comparison with the alarming illiteracy in the Presidency. There was absence of ample guarantee in the Act that primary education would be made free and compulsory in Bengal within a reasonable time. It entirely depended on the volition and whim of the Govt. There was no suitable machinery to translate into action the high ideals laid down in the preamble of the Act, within a period of ten years. The Act of 1930 intended for providing elementary education to 37,00,000 children out of 74,00,000, that was half the total number (27 lakhs of boys out of 38 lakhs and 10 lakhs of girls out of 26 lakhs).
- (11) Some districts had more financial resources than what they actually needed for the purposes of the Act (e.g., Burdwan) while others suffered from serious lack of resources (e.g., Nadia). Nadia had actually less money than what she needed. Hence there was real disparity in respect of financial resources of the different districts. That was also a great hurdle in the way of implementing the Act.
- (12) Increasing and continuous political unrest particularly the civil disobedience movement created a great obstacle in the way of implementing the provision of the Act of 1930. Absence of discipline in the academic arena arrested and jeopardised the acceleration of mass education. The world wide economic depression of the time had its sure repercussion in India particularly in Bengal. Consequently no real progress was made. The Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Act of 1930 practically remained a dead letter. What was once hailed as a boon proved to be a delusion. The illiteracy of the masses continued as a standing disgrace to the country. It was a great slur on the administration of the Govt. which could surely be blamed for this ignoble life of the people.



(13) The Hartog Committee Report exercised an indirect influence on the Primary Education Act of 1930. The Report had emphasised chiefly the qualitative aspect of primary education. But the Act of 1930 aimed at rapid extension (quantity) of mass education. This was the demand of the official Congress which showed virtually green signal to the Act. The Swarajists also held the same view. The Governmental policy thus contained self-contradictions which stood as hurdles in the way of proper implementation of the Act.

(14) The Act of 1930 failed to produce the desired results because it infused communal element in the field of education. The Hon'ble Education Minister (K. Nazimuddin) had narrow and communal vision which was mainly directed to the education of the Muslim children inhabiting dominantly in the East Bengal Districts. The Act thus failed to enlist the whole-hearted co-operation and sympathy of the Hindu community which was essential for the successful implementation of the Act.

In spite of the limited applicability and mounting hurdles the influence of the Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Act of 1930 was tremendous and far-reaching in the arena of mass education. It created a new horizon for educational expansion in Bengal. The act of 1930 accelerated the growth of mass education. The two most outstanding contributions of the Act were (a) the creation of an administering and controlling agency of primary education in the rural areas of Bengal, and (b) the provision of resources through the imposition of education cess. Its impact continues till date.

## CHAPTER IX

### SCHEME OF MR. AZIZUL HAQUE—A SCHEME FOR CONSOLIDATION OF PRIMARY EDUCATION IN BENGAL

The Primary Education Act of 1930, though comprehensive in character, practically remained a dead letter. Due to the world-wide economic depression and the continuous political unrest the much talked education cess could not be enforced. The Act was enforced only in a partial manner. Only 16 districts introduced it on the basis of optional scheme. Thus the Act failed to achieve the desired goal of free and universal primary education in the province. Both inspection and quality of teaching were far from satisfactory. Most of the teachers were untrained, unenthusiastic and inefficient. The conditions of service were deplorable. They were paid a very low salary. Most of the schools suffered from inadequate staff and equipments. This was also true in respect of the method and curriculum of primary education. The curriculum was unsuitable to rural environment. It was denounced as old and obsolete. It failed to meet the needs of society, particularly the vocational and agricultural requirements of the province. The Bengal Presidency was predominantly rural and agricultural. The majority of Bengal's population (more than 90 %) lived in rural areas and were engaged in agriculture. But the primary school curriculum was better adopted to an urban than to a rural population and as such it was unsuitable. The system of education in Bengal was characterised by preponderance of private schools with no adequate public control. There were large numbers of inefficient schools without co-ordination and consolidation. They also suffered from chronic financial instability. Many received no grants from public funds. There were no facilities for organised games and physical recreation. The schools were in moribund condition and failed to achieve the desired literacy and justify their very existence. A thorough over-hauling of the entire system was the need of the time. "A thorough over-hauling of the whole



system of education has long been over due. Its defects and weaknesses are far-reaching and everyday become more threatening. The time come for a well-considered policy and for vigorous action.”<sup>1</sup> It was often said as an excuse that an improvement in quality rather than in quantity was the first requisite of an effective system of primary education. (This was an echo of Hartog’s voice. We have referred it by way of criticism). The whole educational system attached too much importance to secondary and higher education to the utter neglect of primary education. Wastage and stagnation was rampant. Nine out of ten pupils never became literate. The curse of paucity of funds for primary education was still there. “Mr. Adam reported that there was one educational institution in Bengal for every four hundred of her inhabitants, while now there was only one for every 712 persons. Of 52 lakhs of boys of school going age, over 28 lakhs did not go to school and of 48 lakhs of girls of that age 43 lakhs did not go to school.”<sup>2</sup> There were thousands of single teacher schools. Thus since the introduction of the Mont-Ford Reforms the spread of mass education was very meagre and unsatisfactory. The inequitous Meston Award crippled the resources of Bengal. As a result the fate of primary education had been disastrous. Successive years of world-wide economic depression aggravated the situation. The expenditure on education in Bengal had practically remained stationary, being Rs. 1,23,16,000/- in 1922-23 and Rs. 1,27,67,000/- in 1933-1934. Primary education had particularly suffered from this inability to expend. The grant given by Govt. to institutions had to be curtailed at the very time when their other sources of income had diminished or disappeared. The Act of 1930 frustrated the hopes of millions of cultivators in rural Bengal. With a population of 5 crores, Bengal had only 62,600 primary schools in 1934-1935. The year 1935 was considered as the threshold of a new era of provincial autonomy. An educated and enlightened electorate was urgently needed for the successful working of the new constitution. So the time was ripe for review of the whole position, especially of primary education. The time had come for a well-considered policy

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1. The Mussalman (Cal.) of the 23rd Aug., 1935.

2. The Provasi (Cal.) for Bhadra, 1341 B. S.



and vigorous action. The full operation of the Act of 1930 involved decision upon the numbers, the location and distribution of schools, salaries of the teaching staff, the curriculum etc. Before the Act could be given full effect to, detailed schemes and a programme of primary education must have to be worked out.

#### Programme of Reconstruction :

The Govt. proposed, accordingly, a comprehensive programme of reconstruction, a programme which could not immediately be carried into entire effect but which would be steadily pursued till its objects were achieved and necessary funds were available.

The underlying principles of the proposed scheme were:

- (a) Govt. had no desire whatever to make the commodity of education more expensive or to restrict the supply,
- (b) Govt. proposed to offer a wider variety, a better distribution, so that every boy might be able to obtain what was best adopted to his capacity and best fitted him to serve the country,
- (c) it had an intention to mitigate political tension by more adequate control over different types of schools because these were regarded as nurseries of political unrest and nationalist movement. The Resolution<sup>3</sup> of July, 1935 pointed out the defects of the educational system in Bengal and attempted to state clearly how the then system and conditions of education, particularly of primary education, could be reorganised. The Resolution made the following suggestions in regard to improvement of education in Bengal particularly in respect of administration and finance :—
  - (1) the Primary course should last for four years and not for five years.†
  - (2) each primary school would also be expected to main-

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†Notes : The number of Upper Primary schools was comparatively few. The cost of providing and staffing a large number of such schools throughout the province was prohibitive. It was accordingly proposed that the distinction between Upper and Lower Primary schools should be done away with and that the primary course should last for four years.

3. Govt. Resolution No. 2517 Edn., Cal., the 27th July, 1935.



- tain a staff of four teachers as a condition of receiving recognition or aid.
- (3) instruction in all primary schools should be free, as for those who are too poor to pay any fees at all. Thus elementary education should be open to even the poorest.
- (4) it was not proposed to make primary education compulsory immediately. The reasons were obvious :
- (a) the cost of a free compulsory scheme would be entirely beyond the financial resources of the province,
  - (b) compulsion had not proved an unqualified success in rural areas,
  - (c) a well-designed net-work of four-class primary schools would provide the opportunity for education to a very large proportion of children of school-going age. But compulsion was absolutely needed to prevent mounting wastage. In 1932 there were about 1,344,000 children in the lowest class and only about 100,000 in the highest primary class. In other words, a great majority of the children did not stay in school long enough to become literate. Steps should be taken to prevent this wastage. Once a boy joined a primary school he should be compelled to remain at school up to the end of the primary standard subject to this proviso that no boy should be allowed to remain in the same class for more than two years. Compulsion to continue in school would give the children and the teachers a real opportunity to teach and to learn. Legislation, if necessary, should be made to prevent wastage.
- (5) The curriculum should be given "rural bias". It should be adopted to the needs and environment of the majority of the children living in rural areas. Re-orientation of curriculum was needed because (a) the existing one was regarded as too heavy, (b) the primary course should be a self-contained course suited to the village child, (c) the child would be able to grasp more easily and quickly a rural-biased curri-

culum. It should aim at literacy, viz., Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, and should include instruction in the elementary needs of village life and in matters such as personal and village hygiene, home geography and village organisation. Provisions should also be made for vocational instruction in the "highest classes" of primary schools.

- (6) Bengal had a total population of 50 millions, of which a little over 46 millions lived in rural areas. Some fusion, amalgamation and condensation of schools were indispensable preliminary to effective reconstruction. The immediate aim should be 16,000 primary schools of the new type—so located that each school would serve a population of 3,000 or alternatively an area of 2 or 3 square miles.<sup>4</sup>
- (7) Owing to the financial condition of the province, it was not possible to aim at any higher number of primary schools now, but when money would be available more schools could be established.
- (8) The whole of Bengal was to be divided into 16,000 primary school areas distributed in various districts according to population.
- (9) Local adjustments and special considerations would be necessary in areas with special features.
- (10) A survey should be undertaken of the local and standard of existing schools and the possible location of future schools.
- (11) In any scheme of reorganisation of schools the needs of areas which are deficient in schools should specially be considered so that the requirements of educationally backward communities might be satisfied.
- (12) These 16,000 schools with 64,000 teachers working in double shifts were expected to meet the needs of rural areas in the matter of primary education.
- (13) The salaries of headmasters of primary schools should be Rs. 20 per month (for 16,000 headmasters) and of

. The distribution of schools in the new scheme is given in Appendix—VII.



other teachers (48,000) Rs. 15 per month. The minimum cost of a four-teacher school would thus be Rs. 65 for salaries and about Rs. 10 for contingencies, or Rs. 900 a year. The 16,000 schools proposed would ultimately involve an annual expenditure of Rs. 1,44,00,000/-.

- (14) The teacher is the key to the success of an institution. It is the teacher who makes the school. But in Bengal teachers were over-worked, underpaid, untrained and ill-qualified. The system of teacher-training should be reorganised and extended. Provision should be made to train the primary school teachers and for this purpose short training courses in district camps should be organised.
- (15) There should be one school with four classes—I, II, III, IV—located in a central place within the area with a staff of four teachers.
- (16) The Central Primary School should sit for 4 hours in the day-time and would consist of 30 pupils in class I, 20 pupils in class II, 30 pupils in class III and 30 pupils in class IV.
- (17) Each teacher would have only four hours' teaching work in the central primary school and would be able to work another two hours in the morning or in the evening. Two other villages should, therefore, be selected conveniently situated within the areas. Little boys and girls of the lowest classes (Classes I and II) might find it difficult to walk the distance to the central primary school and these were the classes where the largest enrolment might be expected. These two villages would, therefore, each have a feeder or subsidiary school, each with the two lowest classes—classes I and II. The four teachers would be divided into two groups each working for two hours a day in the feeder schools.
- (18) The number of students in each of the classes of the feeder schools should be as in the central schools, viz. 30 in class I and 20 in class II.
- (19) The total number of students in each primary school



area with one central school and two feeder or subsidiary schools would thus be :—

90 in class I, 60 in class II, 30 in class III and 30 in class IV (Total 210).

- (20) The total number of students that could be taught in 16,000 schools as organised above would be 33,60,000 as against the existing roll strength of 21,00,000 distributed in nearly 64,200 primary schools.
- (21) Under the new scheme the Maktabas and primary schools should be co-ordinated. The primary school curriculum should be so devised as to be suitable to both primary schools and Maktabas and so organised as to provide the necessary variation in studies between primary schools and Maktabas.
- (22) Provision should be made in all schools attended by Muslim students for religious instruction and the teaching of Islamic subjects. Similar provision should also be made for Hindu students. (These were ample indications of the influence of growing communalism which had its sure repercussions on the socio-political life of Bengal).
- (23) All primary schools attended by a majority of muslim pupils might be named Maktabas and it might be necessary in places to have Maktabas as separate schools for Muslims only. (This was surely an attempt to infuse communal element in education. Thus preparation was already made for separate electorate).
- (24) Where the number of students justified, there should be separate schools for boys and for girls.
- (25) No girl would, however, be compelled to attend a school where there were boys only or both boys and girls.
- (26) Middle English Schools in rural areas should be transformed into Middle Vernacular Schools. There should be at least one Middle Vernacular School, gradually increased to five, to every 25 primary schools, i.e. from 640 rising upto 3,200 Middle Vernacular Schools.
- (27) A large number of free studentships should be offered to boys of rural primary schools, on the results of Primary Final Examination. Final Examinations



should be instituted at the end of the primary and middle stages.

- (28) Inspectorate for primary schools be reorganised. There should be one Sub-Inspector of Schools to every 100 primary schools. One fourths of the total number of Sub-Inspectors should be recruited from Headmasters of primary schools and one-fourth from teachers of middle schools and they might be paid at a lower scale than the present pay of Sub-Inspectors. The primary school inspectorate should make it their business to educate the villagers in rural uplift. The village primary schools should serve as village welfare centres.
- (29) There should be village halls with libraries containing books suitable to village needs and requirements.
- (30) Better arrangements should be made for the medical inspection of children and for their physical recreation.

In a Memorandum issued in August, 1935 the Govt. of Bengal keenly expressed its desire to expand the opportunities of rural education and to improve the standard so that the dangers of wastage and of lapse into illiteracy might be avoided. In pursuance of its Resolution No. 2517 dated the 17th July, 1935 and the subsequent Memorandum in August of the same year, the Govt. of Bengal appointed in July, 1936 a Primary Curriculum Committee with a view to giving a re-orientation to the primary school curriculum. The Committee was to consider the curricula suitable to the needs of primary schools and Maktabas and the question of religious instruction in those institutions. The committee was entrusted with the work of devising a curriculum which would "provide for effective literacy in the Vernacular, simple calculations, and the basic academic and physical training. School work in general should be adopted in the main to the needs and environment of the majority of the children. It should also provide for a grounding in the rudiments of general knowledge".<sup>5</sup> The recommendations of the committee were approved and adopted

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5. Ninth Quinquennial Review on the Progress of Education in Bengal (1932-1937) Chap.—III.



by the Govt. in a resolution, dated the 9th March, 1937. But it could not be effected immediately because of uncertain political situation in the country, and chronic state of financial difficulties. But it streamlined the future educational developments and reconstruction in the arena of primary education particularly from organisational point of view and as such it deserves careful consideration.<sup>6</sup>

The Committee were of opinion that though a five years' course is educationally very desirable a four years' course may be adopted "in view of the difficulty of financing a scheme involving a five years' course". Govt. in accepting this recommendation observed, "Govt. has been mainly guided by considerations of finance but at the same time they believe that if a primary school is staffed by at least three teachers and there is an organised system of teaching, much more effective literacy could be achieved in four years' than is possible in the present five years' course".<sup>7</sup>

In Bengal the curriculum in History was regarded as too heavy. The question of the inclusion of History in the primary course evoked long discussions in the committee, and it was ultimately decided that the subject would be treated mainly in the form of historical tales in the top two classes.

As regards teaching of English in primary schools the Committee were of opinion that English should not ordinarily be taught in primary schools or in primary departments of secondary schools. It should be taught as an additional subject in the top two classes of primary schools. It was, however, felt that the teaching of English in primary schools could only be allowed in those schools where qualified teachers were available. But when taken up, it would be treated as an examination subject, though the marks obtained in this paper would not be taken into account in the awarding of scholarships. In view of the general demand for teaching of English

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6. A summary of the then existing curriculum of Primary education is annexed in Appendix—VIII for comparison. File No. 14-CI(1). No. 1665 EDN., 1920.
7. (a) Ninth Quinquennial Review on the Progress of Education in Bengal (1932-37) Chap.—III,  
 (b) The Calcutta Gazette, 18th March 1937—Part I, p. 564.



the Committee had but little option and had to make this concession to a popular demand.† Little or no attention had been paid so far in the overwhelming majority of the schools to the physical development of the children. Physical education would henceforth form part of the new syllabus. But there was still no provision whatsoever for the medical examination of primary school children.

The committee did not feel it necessary to make any differentiation between the curricula for boys' and girls' schools respectively, nor was it necessary, according to them, to make any distinction between the rural or urban schools so far as primary curricula were concerned. The Committee, however, suggested different types of hand work and physical exercises for boys and girls in primary schools.

The most striking recommendation of the committee was that religious instruction should be provided in the primary schools; the Committee also drew up detailed syllabuses for religious instruction of Muslim, Christian and Hindu boys. The Act of 1930 had infused communal element in the arena of education. Within a couple of years communalism was at its height even in the field of education. There was a large volume of opinion in the country both among the Muslims and the Hindus in favour of inclusion of some form of religious instruction in the curriculum of primary schools. But many educationists were strongly opposed to the introduction of religious teaching in primary schools. The committee's recommendation was, however, unanimous except for a note of dissent from one member only, Mr. A. N. Basu of the Teachers' Training Department of the University of Calcutta, who was apprehensive that religious instruction might become a travesty of religion leading to dissension and disharmony. The Committee, conceded to the general demand prevailing in the province. There should, however, be no examination in the subject.

The new curriculum was undoubtedly a great advance and some rural bias was given to the teaching in primary schools.

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†Notes : The demand was chiefly voiced by the upper section of the society who regarded knowledge of English as the possible passport for lucrative jobs and social prestige.



But the framing of a curriculum was only a very small part of the work of reconstruction. What was really needed is a new type of teachers with new orientation because it is the teacher who makes the curriculum effective.

The recommendations of the Committee were carefully considered by the Govt. of Bengal in the Ministry of Education† and in their Resolution of March 1937, they generally approved of them with slight modifications and ordered<sup>s</sup> :—

- (i) that a four years' course should be adopted in view of the difficulty of financing a scheme involving a five years' course ;
- (ii) that religious instruction should be provided in the curricula of primary schools ;
- (iii) that the following subjects should be compulsorily taught :—

*Examination subjects :*

- (a) Vernacular Reading and Writing,
- (b) Arithmetic,
- (c) Geography and Rural Civics,
- (d) Elements of Science.

*Non-Examination subjects :*

- (a) Games and physical Exercises,
- (b) Hand work, or work in farms or in the school garden,
- (c) Religious instruction.
- (iv) that some of the schools might be allowed to teach English on their satisfying certain conditions. When taken up, English should be treated as an examination subject ;
- (v) that a departmental public examination should be held at the end of the four years of the primary course : this examination should be open to boys and girls ;

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†Note : From the middle of 1934 till the end of march 1937, the Hon'ble Mr. Muhammad A. Azizul Haque was the Minister of Education, Bengal. The Govt. Resolutions of 1935 and 1937 were issued during his tenure of office. Since the 1st April, 1937, the Hon'ble Chief Minister, Mr. A. K. Fazlul Huq himself had been in charge of the education portfolio of the Govt. of Bengal.

8. The Calcutta Gazette, 18th March, 1937, Part—I, p. 563.



(vi) that scholarships should be awarded on the results of the primary final examination, provided that marks obtained in English would not be taken into account for this purpose.

The curricula for a four years' course was approved by Govt. in 1937, and first it came into operation in 1940 in schools under the District School Board of Mymensingh and subsequently in schools in such other districts as had levied the primary education cess.

The scheme of 1935 had been subjected to drastic criticism in the press and on the platform. The Govt. Resolution of 1935 made inadequate provision of schools to meet the educational needs of the province. It followed a policy of educational retrenchment. It proposed to cut down the number of primary schools from 60,000 to 16,000. That was undemocratic and regarded as curtailment of educational privileges. The 16,000 knee-deep canals with 32,000 feeders were not sufficient for educational irrigation of the vast barren tracts of illiterate countryside. "The abolition of the existing primary schools will do serious harm. The educational system not only calls for reorganisation but expansion as well."<sup>9</sup> The policy of expansion thus received a set back in the Govt. Resolution of 1935. People of Bengal particularly the nationalists wanted rapid expansion of mass education and surely that was the need of the hour. Instead of expansion the Resolution placed *emphasis on consolidation and quality*.<sup>†</sup> The Govt. view was expressed in the following way : "Expansion of education is certainly the need of the province. but if it follows unhealthy and unprofitable channels, the flood may devastate instead of fertilising the country".<sup>10</sup> Thus the Resolution of 1935 registered the trend started at the time of Lord Curzon and repeated in the Hartog Committee Report. That was undoubtedly a regressive trend which went against the course of History.

9. The Dainik Basumati, 7th Aug., 1935.

10. The Modern Review, 1937, Vol. 61, p. 532.

<sup>†</sup>Note : This was not explicitly stated in the Resolution but it was intended by the Govt. mainly from financial consideration.



The Govt. policy was further criticised as the officialisation of mass education. By the Resolution of 1935 Govt. wanted to increase official control over primary education and the results were fatal to education of the people.<sup>11</sup> "Schemes for control of education seem to have become a craze in Bengal. Various tricks for weaning away the minds of students and youngmen from nationalisation are becoming prominent. Various efforts have been made for bringing primary, secondary and in some respects, university education under the direct control of the Government".<sup>12</sup>

The Resolution of 1935 did not take into confidence private enterprise and local bodies as regards spread of elementary education among the masses. This was regarded as an undesirable administrative policy from nationalistic point of view. In the absence of private enterprise and for absolute Govt. control speedy expansion of mass elementary education was impossible.

The most objectionable part of the Govt. Resolution of 1935 was the provision for religious instruction in primary schools. That was dangerous from academic point of view. It was regarded as an injurious drug to the mental health of young children of primary schools. The pure and clean minds of the young children should be freed from the germs of factional feuds, communal plots and internecine discord. "We are afraid that the steps recommended will result in giving a communal bias to the children in the name of religion.....The place for religious education is home, not the school".<sup>13</sup> On the same issue the Ananda Bazar Patrika of the time, a leading daily of Calcutta, made critical comments worth mentioning. "There should, however, be protest against the short-sighted policy under which such ridiculous system for introducing religious education in primary schools has been introduced..... If Govt. are entrusted with the duty of imparting religious education in schools we have not the least doubt that they will use such education as a weapon for political necessity. From this apprehension we are against

11. The Ananda Bazar Patrika (Cal.) 2nd Aug. 1935.

12. The Ananda Bazar Patrika (Cal.) of 14th Aug. 1935.

13. The Sanjivani (Cal.) of the 18th Feb. 1937.



imparting religious education to students at any stage of their career through the Education Department.....It is necessary to discard the scheme altogether in order to protect boys and girls from partial, unreal and evil education regarding religion".<sup>14</sup>

The Government Resolution of 1935 did not aim at introducing compulsion with regard to girls. Hence the decision was retrograde inasmuch as illiteracy was rampant among girls in Bengal. The Act of 1919 as amended in 1931 tried to introduce compulsion for girls. But Govt. Resolution aimed at introducing compulsion only for boys. That was a serious draw back so far as the goal of free and universal elementary education in the province was concerned. Establishment of separate schools for girls was essential to encourage the girls to attend primary schools. In this respect the Govt. Resolution was not encouraging. "The proposed reduction in the number of primary schools will absolutely stop girls from getting primary education".<sup>15</sup>

The Govt. Resolution also did not declare primary education free. Imposition of fees was allowed in the districts where education cess was not levied under the Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Act of 1930. That also stood as a serious handicap in the way of introducing free and universal elementary education. As regards the provision of teacher-training and effective inspection the Govt. Resolution of 1935 was inadequate and far from satisfactory. It was also criticised and not without foundation that it created unnecessary delay in the application of the Act of 1930 and some departmental checks and hurdles in the way of implementation of the Act. It was also said that the Govt. Resolution of 1935 chiefly centered round rural areas. It was not at all concerned with urban population of the province.

But a serious criticism levelled against the Govt. Resolution of 1935 was that it was almost silent about financial resources necessary for the success of the scheme proposed as well as the Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Act of 1930. Finance lay at the root of all problems. Unless this omni-

14. The Ananda Bazar Patrika (Cal.) 20th Feb., 1937.

15. The Ahle Hadis (Cal.) of the 15th Aug., 1935.



present question was solved satisfactorily no scheme of education could be successful inspite of its merit. The scheme of E. E. Biss was cold stored due to paucity of funds. The Act of 1930 would have to face the same fate unless necessary money was provided. "Unless Govt. is prepared to spend more on education, all its proposals for reorganisation are sure to get scotched, for no reorganisation can be satisfactory which does not at the same time extend the educational facilities in the province. One can not expect a bucketful of milk every morning without giving any fodder to the cow".<sup>16</sup> "The Govt's scheme of educational reform is disappointing and it suggests that its aim is to control students and teachers rather than to spread reforms and education. The proposal to abolish upper primary classes was most injurious. It is impossible for little children to walk a mile or two from home to their school. It is also not clear how the reduction in the number of schools would be effected. Govt. would not make primary education compulsory and can not, therefore, abolish the existing schools by force".<sup>17</sup> The Bengal Govt's retrograde educational policy was also vehemently criticised and condemned by educational experts of the time. The most scathing criticisms were levelled against the Govt. Resolution of 1935 by the Bengal Education League and the Calcutta University Senate. Both the organisations put forward constructive proposals for future educational reconstruction in Bengal. Most of the proposals were almost identical. Among the leading educationists who condemned the Govt's educational policy were Dr. Nil Ratan Sircar, Principal Heramba Chandra Maitra, Dr. Promatha Nath Banerjee, Sri Ramananda Chatterjee, Sri Hirendra Nath Dutta, Sri Sudhir Kumar Lahiri and Prof. N. C. Banerjee.

The Bengal Education League in its meeting dated the 19th December, 1935 passed the following resolution. "This meeting is of opinion that most of the proposals contained in the Resolution of the Govt. of Bengal on the reorganisation of school education are of a very retrograde character and calculated to prove detrimental to the educational interest

16. The Mussalman (Cal.) of the 23rd Nov., 1935.

17. The Muhammadi (Cal.) of the 9th Aug., 1935.



of the country. The meeting, therefore, urges that the scheme be abandoned, and the following measures be adopted by the Govt. in order gradually to place the educational system on a sounder and more satisfactory basis :—

- (1) Free and compulsory primary education should be introduced within a period of five years... A large number of new primary schools should be established in unschooled area, but no existing schools, however small, should be abolished.
- (2) Money spent on primary education should be immediately doubled and progressively increased year by year.
- (3) Substantial and increased grants should be made to the existing primary schools so as to enable them to enhance their efficiency by the appointment of better-paid and more qualified teachers.
- (4) All institutions imparting elementary instruction and supported mainly out of public funds, local or provincial, should be of an entirely non-sectarian and non-denominational character and should be known simply as "Primary Schools" and not as Moktabs or Tols.
- (5) Model primary schools should be established in the important villages.
- (6) Special care should be taken in the matter of framing curricula and of selecting text-books, and the methods of teaching should be such as may be calculated to draw out the best in the pupils.
- (7) Education through books should be supplemented by instruction of a practical character.
- (8) Arrangements should be made for imparting moral instruction.
- (9) A number of vocational schools be established in every subdivision.
- (10) Better arrangements should be made for sufficient training of teachers.
- (11) No person with inadequate qualifications should be appointed as Inspector, and it should be recognised as the main duty of the Inspectorate to guide and



inspire the teachers.

- (12) Adequate measures should be taken to extend education among girls by providing, where necessary, separate schools for them and prescribing curricula suitable for Bengal's homes.
- (13) Physical training should be made compulsory in all the stages of education.

The Government resolution of July, 1935 made only tentative proposals for the reorganisation of education in Bengal. After considering the criticisms and suggestions from individuals and public bodies, the Govt. of Bengal issued a fresh Resolution<sup>18</sup> in March, 1937, laying the policy and programme which should be followed in future in regard to primary education. The new Resolution outlined a scheme which in the main fell under three heads :—

- (1) Distribution of schools throughout the province which would place educational facilities within reasonable reach of every child.
- (2) The prevention of the present wastage by ensuring that as far as possible children should attend primary schools for a minimum period of four years and should not leave before the end of that period.
- (3) The provision of a well trained and reasonably well paid body of teachers who would regard primary school teaching as their vocation.

(1) As regards distribution of schools the Resolution said that there were 64,200 primary schools, of which 9,853 were of the upper primary standard. These 9,853 schools were located in 8,500 villages. The remaining 54,347 lower primary schools were located in 28,631 villages. There were approximately 1,00,000 villages in Bengal. Hence there were nearly 63,000 villages in the province without a school even of the lower primary standard. The final scheme of 1937 abandoned the proposal of central-cum-feeder schools (16,000 central upper primary schools and 32,000 lower feeder schools which were meant for 36 lakh pupils) because of vehement criti-

18. Govt. of Bengal, Ministry of Education, Resolution No. 1037 Edn., dated the 9th March, 1937, published in the Calcutta Gazette of the 18th March, 1937—Part-I, pp. 560-65.



cisms in different sections of the society. It, therefore, proposed to establish primary schools upto the upper primary standard in every "Unit of School area" and so located that no child might be required to walk more than a mile.<sup>19</sup> As it was not possible to implement the scheme immediately a careful survey would be needed to ascertain the nature of existing schools and the location of the school of the new type.

(2) As regards wastage in primary education the Resolution mentioned that although there were over 64,200 primary schools in Bengal, most of them were ineffective and contributed little towards the removal of illiteracy. It had already been mentioned that there were only 9,853 upper primary schools and over 54,000 lower primary schools. A lower primary school had an average of 32 pupils. Very few of the pupils attending a lower primary school could continue for more than one year. The teaching in these schools was neither good nor sufficiently prolonged to ensure literacy. A lower primary school thus contributed practically nothing towards the solution of the problem of primary education. But even in the case of the 9,853 upper primary schools there was an enormous wastage. Literacy could only be assured to a pupil who passed through class IV. Only 1.5 out of 21 ( Infant class—21.0 ; class IV—1.5 ) or about 7 per cent of the pupils received any material benefit from primary education.<sup>20</sup> The contribution of the existing primary schools towards literacy was thus practically nil. Hence the then primary school organisation was of very doubtful value. Out of over 64,000 primary schools only 5,000 were useful for the purpose of literacy. The remaining schools numbering nearly 60,000 were without worth so far as their educational utility was concerned. In the face of this appalling wastage, no scheme could be successful. In Bengal, the introduction of effective compulsion was urgently needed to prevent this huge wastage.

(3) As regards provision of qualified teachers the Resolution mentioned further that the unsatisfactory nature of

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19. Ibid—p. 562.

20. The Calcutta Gazette, 18th March, 1937, Part-I, p. 561.



teaching provided was one of the reasons for the failure of the present system of primary education.<sup>21</sup> Success of a primary school mainly depends upon the teacher. It was absolutely necessary that the teachers who were to be responsible for primary education should regard their work as a life's vocation, should be reasonably paid and should be efficiently trained for their duties. But the position was deplorable and far from satisfactory. "The pilots, who were to steer the boat of education in unchartered waters, could be hired for the glorious honorarium of less than a factory labourer's or town menial's wages".<sup>22</sup>

"The total expenditure upon 64,000 primary schools was approximately Rs. 80,00,000/-. The total number of teachers engaged in primary schools was 88,000. It worked out an average of Rs. 7-8-0 per month per teacher."† But this sum included the teachers' income from fees and other sources. In Bengal fees contributed the highest in India. The only assured average income of a primary school teacher from public funds, i.e. the Govt., District Board and Municipality, was Rs. 4-8-0 per month. The total public contribution (Govt. District Board and Municipality combined) was Rs. 47,00,000/-.<sup>23</sup> "The average pay of a teacher in a primary school under private management was Rs. 3.3 per month. A Police Constable, a post peon and even a chaprasi in a Govt. Office was paid higher".<sup>24</sup> Naturally it was not possible to get either a qualified or a contended teacher for this small amount. The newly proposed scheme could not be successful unless the teachers were trained and paid a reason-

21. Ibid—p. 562.

22. The Modern Review—1937, Vol.-61, p. 533.

23. The Calcutta Gazette, 18th March, 1937, Part-I, p. 562.

24. The Ninth Quinquennial Review on the Progress of Edu., in Bengal (1932-37) Chap.—III.

†Notes : In 1936-37 the total expenditure on primary schools was calculated to Rs. 83,09,190. The total number of teachers engaged in primary schools was 92,156. District expenditure on primary education was Rs. 26,66,789 (Ninth Quinquennial Review on the Progress of Education in Bengal (1932-37) Chap.—I.



able remuneration. The Resolution suggested the following minimum salaries for teachers in Bengal :—

|                             |                         |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Trained Head Master         | ... Rs. 16/- per month. |
| Trained Teacher             | ... Rs. 14/- per month. |
| Untrained Assistant Teacher | ... Rs. 10/- per month. |

The Resolution of 1935 suggested four teachers in a primary school, but the Resolution of 1937 suggested only three teachers in a primary school on financial grounds. Hence the provision for staff in the Govt. Resolution of 1937 was undoubtedly inadequate and regressive. After the publication of the Resolution of 1937 the salaries of the teachers were revised and Notification No. 877-Edn. of the 8th April, 1941 Govt. laid down that the Headmaster and the trained teacher of an aided primary school under private management coming under the new scheme should get Rs. 16/- and Rs. 12/- per month respectively.

The programme of schools as revealed in the Govt. Resolution of 1937 runs as follows :—

“In a scheme involving a primary course of 4 years’ duration, primary schools must provide education for about 30 lakh boys and 26 lakh girls between the ages of 6 and 10 years. Even where education is compulsory, not every boy or girl can attend a school and at the inception it is proposed to apply compulsion only in the case of boys. It is calculated that if provision is made for the education of 80 per cent of 30 lakh boys and 40 per cent of the 26 lakh girls a satisfactory beginning will have been made. For 24 lakh boys and 10 lakh girls it is estimated that 25,000, 3-Teacher schools each with about 135 pupils will be needed and distributed as follows :—

|             |               |
|-------------|---------------|
| Class — I   | ... 40 pupils |
| Class — II  | ... 35 ”      |
| Class — III | ... 30 ”      |
| Class — IV  | ... 30        |

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|       |                |
|-------|----------------|
| Total | ... 135 pupils |
|-------|----------------|

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Where the population is uniformly distributed, the location of such schools would be easy. But there are congested areas and sparsely populated areas, and after a survey of the existing conditions, Govt. are of opinion that the province will be reasonably well served by the provision of 12,000 3-teacher schools, 12,000 two-teacher schools, and 15,000 one-teacher schools, making a total of 39,000 schools with 75,000 teachers".<sup>25</sup> "If such a school is worked with a staff of three teachers, for Bengal can not afford to have one teacher for each class, the average annual expenditure per school will be as follows :—

|                    | Rs. per annum          |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| Headmaster         | ... 192                |
| Two other teachers | ... 288                |
| Contingencies      | ... 60                 |
| Total              | ... 540" <sup>26</sup> |

Although the Resolution of 1937 practically negated some of the proposals and modified most of the proposals tentatively made in the Resolution of 1935, still it must be said that it clearly laid down the principles which should be followed in future in regard to the development of primary education in Bengal. About organisation and programme, the Resolution of 1937 enumerated the following conclusions of Government.<sup>27</sup>

- (1) Unit School Area : Subject to local adjustments and special considerations, every district should be divided into a suitable number of school units ordinarily on the basis of an average population of 2,000 or alternatively an area not exceeding 3.14 square miles.†

25. The Calcutta Gazette, 18th March, 1937, Part-I, pp. 564-65.

26. The Calcutta Gazette, 18th March, 1937, Part-I, p. 563.

27. Ibid—Annexure-I, pp. 566-67.

†Notes : "If a school is situated in the centre of an area of 3.14 sq. miles, the maximum distance that a child would have to cover will be only a mile".



- (2) *Organisation* : (a) Every School Board shall organise one primary school in each unit of school area, (b) The School Boards shall either themselves organise such schools or encourage private and local efforts in the establishment of such schools, (c) Every School Board shall be competent to arrange for more than one school in a unit of school area if in their opinion one school does not adequately serve the unit. Here again the School Board may take the help of private and local enterprise, (d) The School Board shall also be competent to recognise other primary schools within a school unit organised and maintained through private enterprise, as long as such schools satisfy the general outline of the scheme and do not require any financial assistance from any public fund, (e) In the organisation of primary schools, primary classes of middle and high schools and of junior and high madrasahs may be taken as primary schools.
- (3) *Duration of Primary Course* : A primary school shall consist of four classes, and for this purpose, the classes shall be known as Class I, II, III, IV. Primary Education shall thus ordinarily last for four years.
- (4) *Staff* : Each school should ordinarily have three teachers—One headmaster and two assistant teachers.
- (5) *Religious Education* : (Conscience Clause) Provision shall, so far as possible, be made in every primary school for religious instruction during school hours for every child attending the school in the religion of the guardian of such child. At the request in writing of the guardian of any child, such child shall be exempted from religious instruction.
- (6) *Holidays* : Every school Board shall arrange holidays in primary Schools in such a manner as to be suitable to local needs but the total number of holidays excluding Sundays shall not exceed 75 days.
- (7) *Compulsion* : Steps should be taken to introduce free and compulsory education for boys in accordance with the provisions of Primary Education Act of



1930. There will be no compulsion for girls at the beginning, but it will be left to local option to demand compulsion for girls.

- (8) *Fees in Primary Schools* : If a School Board in any district desires to levy fees in any primary school, such fees should not exceed two annas per month in any class, and children who are poor should invariably be exempted from payment.
- (9) *Separate Schools for Girls* : When the number of pupils justifies, there may be separate schools for boys and girls, but otherwise all primary schools will be open to both boys and girls. No girl will, however, be compelled to attend any boys' school.
- (10) *Honorary Inspectors* : The Director of Public Instruction, Bengal, may from time to time appoint Honorary Inspectors of Primary Education with authority to inspect such schools in such areas as the Director may decide in this behalf.
- (11) There shall be the same general curricula for primary schools and maktabas. The primary curricula shall be as follows :—
  - (a) Vernacular Reading and Writing,
  - (b) Arithmetic,
  - (c) Geography and Rural Civics,
  - (d) Elements of Science,
  - (e) Games and Physical Exercises,
  - (f) Hand work and Gardening,
  - (g) Religious instruction.
- (12) A departmental public examination shall be held at the end of the four years of the primary course. This examination shall be open to boys and girls.

In municipal areas and even in rural areas of districts where School Board had not been formed, the primary course should continue for five years.

Increased accommodation, satisfactory location, properly trained and contented teachers, efficient control and finally compulsion in regard to attendance were the most important steps in formulating schemes for removal of illiteracy in Bengal. It was hoped that enforcement of the Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Act of 1930 in the light of the instructions

issued in the Government Resolutions of March, 1937 would enable the local authorities to tackle the above mentioned problems efficiently. The Government Resolutions of July, 1935 and March, 1937 indicated the lines along which things would proceed.



## IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY—FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The importance of primary education in the life of a nation is unlimited. Literacy is a supreme need for a country's all-round development—social, political and economic. Desired literacy could not be achieved in the past due to apathy of a foreign ruler, administrative lacuna and financial stringency. The last two problems are not of recent origin. These are creations of the past. We have inherited these since the introduction of western education in our country. Our enquiry reveals that it was either due to administrative weakness or paucity of funds that stood as insurmountable hurdles in the way of expansion of mass education. These two age-old problems are intimately connected with the question of expansion of mass education.

### *Findings :*

We have observed very carefully the demand for mass education and the various administrative and financial measures adopted in this regard during the diarchical constitution of Bengal. We are now in a position to make some observations.

The First World War had its tremendous effects on the social, political and economic life of India. She participated in the World War in the hope of having more political and economic concessions from the British rulers. National education movement created a strong demand for mass education. National leaders both inside and outside the Congress demanded expansions of primary education on the socio-political ground. The British Government could not completely ignore this popular national demand as a matter of "policy".

In 1921 Dyarchy was introduced and education became a transferred subject. It came in the hands of the elected minister who was responsible to the Governor-in-Council. A new hope was raised in the minds of Indian people almost in every province for expansion of mass education through a suitable educational plan and its proper implementation by the res-



possible popular Minister. But soon all hopes for quantitative and qualitative development of elementary education were proved futile. The high hopes that were raised with the inauguration of the Reforms were not fulfilled in this province. But practically the whole period of 1921-1937 was one of a chronic state of extreme financial difficulty. The Meston Award, on the inauguration of the Reforms, hit the province very hard and a Retrenchment Committee had to be appointed in 1922, large measures of economy in educational expenditure had to be introduced. This continued for some years when the outlook appeared to be somewhat brighter. But the world depression of 1929-32 and the consequent fall in prices, especially of jute, created a position of great financial difficulty for the province and it was further aggravated by a series of political disturbances which called for additional expenditure which the foreign Govt. was always ready to make. This strained the finances of Bengal almost to the breaking point. Another Retrenchment Committee (1932) of the Legislative Council again tooth-combed all expenditure and educational expenditure was drastically reduced.

Though Bengal had the largest number of primary schools in India, the majority of them could not even perform their elementary and fundamental task of making their pupils literate. Literacy had been spreading very slowly in the province and it was doubtful if it had spread at all during the whole period of dyarchical administration. The financial assistance that was provided by the Government was disproportionately small and the Local Self-Governing Bodies in the province had been spending much less on education than in any other of the Indian provinces.

There had been no deliberate and courageous attempt in Bengal presidency to introduce any scheme of mass education. In spite of the pre-dominantly rural and agricultural character of the province, the system of education was adopted better for an urban population, particularly for employment in towns, and primary education was sacrificed at the altar of secondary or higher education.

The Imperial Govt. showed little or no interest in the matter of educational expansion. Finance was said to be the main and insurmountable obstacle in the way. Under the new



constitutional arrangement finance remained in the reserved list. The Central Govt. took an apathetic attitude towards the expansion of primary education. The lame excuse was 'shortage of funds'. But since the introduction of Dyarchy, popular demand for mass education increased day by day. This is evident from the following observation made in the Quinquennial Review on the Progress of Education in Bengal (1927-1932) :

"A burst of enthusiasm swept children into school. With unparalleled rapidity, an almost child like faith in the value of education was implanted on the minds of people ; parents were prepared to make almost any sacrifice for the education of their children".

The role and contribution of private enterprise during the national education movement towards the expansion of mass education was remarkable. But the main purpose was defeated by the Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Act of 1930. The optional provisions of the Act gave a death-blow to the cause of and demand for mass education. Compulsion became a far-cry. It remained in paper. Under the garb of the optional provisions of the Act the real intention behind the Act was defeated. Financial stringency was not the main issue or criterion. The real intention was to checkmate the march of mass education. During the financial year of 1936-1937, a total of 24 crores of rupees was spent. But only 8.4 crore was earmarked for primary education.

**The study reveals in brief the following findings :**

During the period of dyarchical constitution primary education could not progress satisfactorily due mainly to inadequate financial provision and administrative apathy. Consequently the aim of universal, free and compulsory primary education could not be carried too far. This surely had its repercussion in the long run. The directive principle of state policy as laid down in Art. 45 of the Constitution could not be implemented properly due to immense backlog. The inevitable result was the death-knell of universal literacy. Of late the Govt. of West Bengal has declared education free upto Class VIII both in rural and urban areas. But the question of compulsion is still a theoretical one.



The causes that hindered the progress of mass education are not far to seek. These may be stated in brief as follow :

(1) All through our investigation we have noticed painfully that paucity of funds constituted the greatest stumbling block in the way of mass education. Because of financial difficulties free, universal and compulsory primary education had received very little attention. Compulsion could not be enforced strictly to avoid huge wastage. The expenditure of primary education was deplorably low in Bengal as compared with other provinces. The average annual cost of educating a boy was Rs. 3.5 in Bengal as against Rs. 12.9 in Bombay. The imperialist Govt. always tried to shift the onus of financial obligation to the teeming millions of our countrymen through the imposition of education cess and various other taxes. Spread of mass education was not their aim. They attached undue importance to secondary and higher education at the cost of mass education. So they had little intention to release necessary funds for the success of the schemes for mass education. Truly speaking, primary education should have the biggest claim on public finance. But what happened actually was just the reverse. Very often funds earmarked for primary education were diverted to other purposes such as police administration and raising the salary of high officials. Fees and other public contributions formed the bulk of the expense of mass education. The proportion from provincial sources was very small compared with other provinces. The local bodies did seldom exert themselves for proper assessment and collection of education cess and never took initiative to augment the resources by other means. Meagre budgetary grants were considerably consumed by various non-recurring expenses. The grinding poverty of the parents compelled them to use the labour of their children at home or outside. Ever increasing population put a heavy pressure on the financial resources and created imbalance in educational expense. The economic status of the teachers who formed the backbone of the educational set up was deplorable and the amount of salary paid to them was highly unsatisfactory, incredibly low and below human subsistence.

(2) The social causes included the age-old backwardness



of certain communities, castes and tribes created by a long history of exploitation and sub-human existence. Mounting illiteracy of parents, conservative social usages and customs, discrimination against girls including their early marriage and engagement in domestic services intensified the crisis.

The physical problems created by lack of roads and transport in the rural areas and the psychological reservation against co-education were no less responsible for appalling mass illiteracy.

(3) From the administrative point of view, the progress of mass education was retarded by the wrong implementation of the policy of grant-in-aid. Departmental red-tapism was the order of the day. Inspection was far from satisfactory.

(4) Academically the curriculum was most unsuitable and adopted only to the needs of urban life and traditional clerical professions. The weight of English was too heavy although abolition of English at this stage was often talked of. Teachers lacked academic proficiency and the inevitable result was the deterioration of standard of education.

(5) Politically the imperialist and colonial policy of the British Govt. did not at all like expansion of mass education in apprehension of popular upsurge and strong national opposition to the foreign rule. That is why compulsive acts were not passed when expansion was more required. The attention was more turned to "qualitative improvement" and the reason is obvious. The weakness of the national movement led by upper and middle classes of society was no less responsible for the slow progress of mass education.

Thus economic, social, administrative, academic and political handicaps made the problem of providing universal, free and compulsory primary education extremely difficult. Financial and administrative lapses perhaps were the greatest hindrances in this regard.

The present state of mass illiteracy was originally a creation of the British bureaucracy. But even after independence the problem has not been tackled successfully and the declared reason is the old one—paucity of funds which acted as the greatest impediment in this regard. In free India this excuse can not be taken for granted. The nation's greatest and immediate need should not be deferred because of want



of funds. Every civilised nation has successfully solved this question of mass education. Expansion of mass education should be accorded the highest priority and for this reason it has a greater claim on the budget. If everything can go on smoothly, the financing of mass education should also go without lame or flimsy pretext of paucity of funds. The Central Government (though education constitutionally is a state subject), can not avoid its responsibility in this regard. Central assistance for primary education should be augmented. Making suitable provision and financing of mass education is no doubt the basic duty of the State Government, but it should also be treated as a national concern. To quote the views of the Education Commission (1964-66) education is essentially a responsibility of the State Govt. but it is also a national concern and in certain major sectors decisions have to be taken at the national level. Central assistance to the states runs mainly on the following lines : (a) Extension Service for training of Primary teachers, (b) Setting up of Institutes of Education for the improvement of elementary education, (c) School meal service and (d) Improvement and expansion of teachers' training facilities.

To provide free elementary education to all children in the age-group 6-14 years is a Constitutional obligation of our Government (Art. 45). But this obligation can not be fulfilled without adequate financial assistance to the State Govts. by the Central Government. To meet this onerous obligation, reallocation of financial resources between the centre and the States is necessary. Rethinking is going on in this respect in our socio-political arena. For a solid basis of democratic set up and consolidation of the federal structure, division of financial resources on more equitable basis is an absolute imperative. The State Govts. and the local bodies should be provided with adequate financial assistance so that they can launch vigorous developmental programmes for the expansion of mass education. A nation can grow, develop and maintain its existence only through education of its people which is the only honourable basis of human existence in these days.

**Recommendations : Assessment and Estimate of Needs :**

- (1) Administration of primary education is mainly under



Govt. control and management. Local bodies (and private enterprise) also play a predominant role in the establishment and management of primary schools. The Administration of primary education is provided with a four-tier process. The State Govt. stands at the apex and the village Panchayet or the school committee at the bottom.\* The State Govt. exercises its administrative control through Acts of Legislature. Academic supervision of the State Govt. materialises through the prescription of syllabus, production of text-books appointment and approval of teachers and inspectors, conduct of Primary Final Examination, payment of grants to local bodies like the Municipalities and the District School Boards. At the State level it is necessary to set up a State Board for Primary and general education recommended by the Kothari Commission. The West Bengal Primary Education Act of 1973 had suggested the establishment of West Bengal Board of Primary Education, District Primary School Councils, Calcutta Primary School Council and Municipal Primary School Councils. Thus decentralisation is proposed with Central control. But the Act of 1973 remains inoperative. A comprehensive amendment of the Act covering rural and municipal areas and the city of Calcutta is known to be in the offing.

In Municipal areas where compulsory free primary education has been started, there are school committees for control and management of primary schools. Each municipality has a standing education committee to formulate policy and programmes of primary education. In urban areas primary schools are classified under three broad heads as per management and control : (a) Schools managed by Municipalities or corporation, (b) Schools under private management by managing committees and voluntary organisations or Missions, aided or unaided, (c) Schools sponsored by Government.

Government recognition is necessary for the categories (b) and (c) and these are under the supervision of the District Inspector of Schools for Primary Education. Schools that fall under category (a) are supervised and managed by an Education Officer with an Education Committee.

Both State Govt. and Calcutta Corporation have to deal with primary education in the Calcutta City area. This dyar-



chy has led to the most unsatisfactory results. There is conspicuous lack of coordination between the State Govt. and the Calcutta Corporation. No serious attempt has been made to cover Calcutta Corporation area by compulsory free primary education schemes. This needs immediate attention as more than 40 per cent of 6-11 years old children are deprived of primary education in the City of Calcutta. Of late the State Government has appointed an Advisory Committee for primary education in the City of Calcutta. But the function of the Committee is not upto the expectation as it has no statutory executive powers, but only advisory functions. The total number of primary schools run by the Calcutta Corporation is 262 (with one creche) with (255-260-1010) 1525 teachers and 46,000 students. The Corporation spends Rs. 1 crore 45 lakhs annually for the City of Calcutta.

In the Corporation area of Calcutta there are only 12 Govt. owned and managed primary schools. The total number of primary schools under private management is 230. The number of Govt. sponsored free primary schools is 40. The number of Govt. recognised and aided primary schools is 650. These are under the direct management and control of an Inspector of Schools for the City (District) of Calcutta. The Inspector is in direct touch with the aforesaid advisory committee.<sup>1</sup>

The role played by C.M.D.A. in the renovation and establishment of primary schools in the Greater Calcutta area (33 Municipalities) and the City of Calcutta is noticeable. Though it has no direct responsibility for primary education, it conducts some schemes relating to primary education under a separate wing known as the "Slum Improvement and Municipal Anchal Development Sector". Its responsibility is mainly financial. The C.M.D.A. executes two schemes—(a) repair and renovation of existing old and dilapidated buildings and (b) construction of new ones for primary education. Under the first programme the C.M.D.A. has renovated about 600 primary school buildings, and 400 such buildings are under consideration. The original allot-

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\*1. Data as supplied by the Education Officer of the Calcutta Corporation.



ment for renovation of each building amounted to Rs. 10,000. Now it has been increased from 20,000 to 25,000. Under the second programme the C.M.D.A. has constructed new buildings at the cost of Rs. 68,000 each in the C.M.D.A. area. The number of such buildings is 200. Construction of 40 more schools is under consideration. The World Bank has credited to C.M.D.A. Rs. 60 lakhs for the purpose. The C.M.D.A. intends to spread the programme over more than 40 schools. Both the schemes are at work. The financial resources for the schemes under C.M.D.A. include State Government aid, Dutch assistance and the World Bank credit. Renovation is made only in Govt. recognised schools. There is no primary school under direct management of C.M.D.A. After renovation of old buildings and completion of new ones these are handed over to Govt. Education Department. It has a Primary School Committee with a Govt. representative and a non-official Chairman.<sup>2</sup>

In rural areas primary education was chiefly under the control of the District School Boards set up under the Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Act of 1930. But elected District School Boards no longer exist. The present School Boards are ad-hoc in character consisting of both official and non-official members. Each Board has a non-official Chairman and the District Inspector of Schools for Primary Education is the ex-officio Secretary. The Ad-hoc Boards have inherited almost all the statutory powers and obligations of the old District School Boards. The School Boards pay for teachers, furniture and equipment, accept and manage land and buildings donated by people. They have also attendance committees, but practically with no function. There are 15 such ad-hoc District School Boards.

Though Panchayet Raj Institution has been associated with the primary education of West Bengal, yet the Panchayets (Village Panchayets and Gram Samities under the West Bengal Panchayet Act of 1973) have nothing to do with primary education. They spend only 74 paise per capita for civic amenities. But in C.M.D.A. area, per capita expenditure

\*2. Data as supplied by the Slum Improvement and Municipal Anchal Development Sector of the C.M.D.A.



including education is Rs. 85/-. The disparity is noticeable. The Zilla Parishads under the Panchayet Act of 1973 have no direct link with primary education. The District School Boards are no longer standing committees of the Zilla Parishads. They are at present independent of the Zilla Parishads. Under the West Bengal Zilla Parishads Act (Act XXXV of 1963) of 1963 the District School Boards had been constituted as the "standing committees" of the Zilla Parishads. Normally the Zilla Parishads do not incur any expenditure on primary education. But due to the last flood havoc in Oct., 1978 Zilla Parishads have decided to spend Rs. 2 crores for repair and reconstruction of primary school buildings in 10 districts through the Panchayets. (G. O. No. 333-Edn(P) dated 6.1.79 and No. 58-Edn(P) dated 11.1.79)<sup>3</sup>

There are large numbers of privately owned and managed primary schools in this province particularly in urban areas. There are 230 such schools only in the City of Calcutta. They do not care for Govt. aid or recognition, and charge high fees. The existence of such schools is a gross violation of the democratic principle of equality of educational opportunity. These schools, of course, supplement Govt. efforts to bring primary education within the reach of every child.

To counteract the evil effects of red-tapism and administrative bungling the entire administrative machinery has to be overhauled. Democratisation of educational administration is the first essential requisite in this regard. The demand for a State Board for Primary Education is an old one. The District Committees should be reorganised and given more powers. Day to day official domination should be minimised as far as possible. More effective means are to be invented by the local bodies to augment their income and enforce the present avenues of revenue strictly. Panchayet Committee should form the lowest unit of administrative hierarchy. Village Panchayets elected on democratic basis may be entrusted with more powers both administrative and financial to overcome the difficulty of expanding mass elementary education in the rural sector. The Panchayets can provide

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\*3. Data as supplied by the Directorate of Panchayet, Govt. of West Bengal.



education according to the needs and desires of the rural people. At the village level it should and can be the only dependable and desirable agency for mass education.

(2) Inspection and supervision is an integral part of good administration. But effective inspection at present is a far cry. The organisation of the inspectorate in West Bengal is a four-tier set-up. There is one chief Inspector for primary and basic education at state level.\*\* In every district there is a district inspector of schools for primary education. At the subdivisional level we find Assistant and Deputy Assistant Inspectors of Schools. The Sub-Inspectors at the thana or block level form the most important part of the Inspectorate. The total number of approved posts of Sub-Inspectors of Schools (now called Circle Inspectors) in West Bengal is 618. The number of Deputy Assistant Inspectors of Schools is 177. Thus the total number of these two categories of Inspectors is 795. About 10-15% vacancies occur annually. Both these types of Inspectors play a very important part in general inspection of primary schools. Without effective inspection no scheme of primary education can be successful. But the condition of inspection is very unsatisfactory both in respect of quality and quantity. This is an age-long problem. At present the Sub-Inspectors are recruited from trained graduates with little or no knowledge of primary education and rural life. They never act as constructive critics or friends to the primary teachers. Schools should be regularly inspected to ensure regular and timely attendance of teachers and of students, adequate availability of teaching aids and appliances. At present one Sub-Inspector has to supervise about 50 to 100 schools. This seems to be too large a number to be performed effectively. The remuneration and conditions of service of the Inspectors should also be improved.

(3) Finance forms the most vital aspect of the provision of universal free elementary education for the masses. The imperialist British Government had always raised the lame excuse of paucity of funds. But in free India this should

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\*\*Now the post has been abolished and redesignated as Deputy Director of Public Instruction (Primary) I.



not stand as an obstacle in the way of providing universal free education to the people. It is their right to get education at the cost of the state which has a constitutional obligation to provide free universal elementary education for the age-group 6-14. More central assistance should be provided and more effective avenues of revenue should be charted in the province. Cess was imposed in the past under the Primary Education Act of 1919 and Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Act of 1930 but with no palpable or expected results. Many local bodies were either reluctant to impose education cess or could not enforce it strictly. The Biss' scheme failed as the municipalities were not inclined to bear the burden of their share of cost. The optional provisions of the Primary Education Act of 1930 gave a death-blow to the cause of free and universal elementary education in the province. The Act imposed education cess at the rate of 5 paise per rupee. By the West Bengal Urban Primary Education Act of 1963 Education cess was proposed to be levied at the rate of 2% on the annual value of holdings in Municipal areas. But this did not at all help the Municipalities in West Bengal to introduce universal compulsory education in urban areas. The said 20% rate was not imposed. The Primary Education Act of 1973 which is a comprehensive Act has dealt with taxes on property (section 77) and education cess (section 78) on the annual value of lands at the rate of ten paise per rupee. It has also proposed cess on coal mines and quarries. But this act is now inoperative. Apart from central assistance at an enhanced rate and redistribution of the financial resources between the Centre and the States, new avenues of revenue should be tapped with suitable guards for their realisation. The big businesses, the multi-storied buildings in the City of Calcutta and Urban areas, the big agricultural farms, the mines, the tea-gardens may be taxed to augment the financial resources of the state and to implement the goal of universal free compulsory education both in rural and urban areas. Tax evasions of all kinds particularly income-tax and custom duties should be prevented to augment the resources of the Government and the additional income may be earmarked for primary education.

(4) The goal of free universal elementary education can



never be achieved without making it compulsory. But compulsion is also a far cry in this state. In the past, compulsion could not be enforced strictly. Paper compulsion was no compulsion. This is true even to-day. In urban areas compulsion is only partial. The Urban Primary Education Act of 1963 (Act XXVIII) provided for free and compulsory education in the Municipalities of West Bengal. In pursuance of this Act compulsory free primary education has been introduced in 18 Municipalities so far out of 93 (excluding 3 Notified Area Authorities and 4 Town Committees) Municipalities in West Bengal. The Act has repealed the Primary Education Act of 1919. Compulsion is also in force in rural areas, i.e., almost in all the districts of West Bengal except Purulia. But compulsion in rural areas is only theoretical. Attendance is not enforced. Compulsion is meaningless without making education absolutely free. Fortunately for us education upto Class VIII as per Constitutional directive has been declared free by the present Government. The decision has raised a new hope in the minds of those children who had to leave school prematurely due to sheer poverty. Where compulsory free education has been introduced, there are provisions for the setting up of School Committees in municipal areas and Attendance Committees in rural areas. But the working of these committees is far from satisfactory. Wastage and stagnation—the gravest menace to primary education, can never be checkmated successfully without introducing effective compulsion and increasing the duration of school life of every child. Out of 100 children in Class I only 40 reach Class VI. It is surely a great wastage of time, human energy and resources. In order to make primary education functional in nature, stagnation should also be prevented. More elementary schools should be established specially in rural areas to reach the target of universal education for the age-group 6-14. At present there are 38,454 villages in West Bengal and 42,998 primary schools. The percentage of enrolment in schools in this state in 75 in the age-group 6-10.<sup>4</sup> Not all the enrolled children continue studies to the end of Class IV. Thus

\*4. Data taken from the Statistical Abstract of the State Bureau of Statistics, Govt. of West Bengal.



the establishment of elementary schools in sufficient numbers alone will not be able to ensure cent per cent enrolment of children in schools. Expansion of education has been a major problem with planners and administrators. The adoption of the system of part-time education may be thought of for those children who are required to work in or for their families. Such a programme will obviously tackle the most acute of problems which we have to face at present :

- (i) Inability of a large number of children in the age-group 9-14 to attend school on whole-time basis on account of poverty,
- (ii) The large wastage that now occurs, because the moment a child grows old enough to earn, he is withdrawn from school.

Not less than 35,000 more elementary schools should be established and as many as 1,00,000 additional teachers should be employed if elementary education has to be made compulsory for all children in the age-group 6-14.

"100 per cent of the children of age-group 6-11 years would be given schooling facilities in classes I to V by the end of 1982-83. At the end of the Fifth Plan (1977-78), 59.93 lakhs of children (boys 37.66 lakhs and girls 22.27 lakhs) out of the total child population of 71.06 lakhs of the age group 6-11 years were expected to have been covered by primary education in classes I-V. By this enrolment 84 per cent of the children of the age-group 6-11 will have been brought under facilities of primary education.

During the Sixth Plan it is proposed to enrol an additional 16.56 lakhs of children of the age-group 6-11 years (including 5 lakhs in nonformal schools). By enrolling these children, it is expected that 100 per cent of the children of this age-group will be given schooling facilities in classes I-V by the end of 1982-83, when the total enrolment is expected to be 74.49 lakhs.

During the financial year 1978-79, 1,200 new primary schools were sanctioned and 3,800 additional teachers were proposed to be appointed. During 1979-80, 1,200 new pri-



mary schools with 3,800 teachers will be set up, with effect from 1st January, 1979'.\*

### Expansion and Improvement : A Projection

At this stage concrete proposals for speedy expansion of mass education during the next four years may be suggested although they have only an indirect dependence upon the historical backgrounds studied herein.

(1) At the end of the Sixth Five Year Plan (1978-83) provision for primary education on the basis of 100 per cent enrolment has to be made for 75 lakhs of children of the age-group 6-11. Schooling facilities for primary education have to be provided at least upto class V. There should be a pre-primary preparatory class. So schooling facilities have to be provided for six classes in all. The average teacher-pupil ratio should be 1 : 40. The enrolment in the first four classes is expected to reach at 170 (preparatory 50—class I 40—class II 40—class III 40). Taking 30 boys in class IV and class V each the total enrolment in six classes will be 230. Dividing 75 lakhs of school-going children of the age-group 6-11 by 230 the total number of six-class primary schools (including preparatory stage) in West Bengal is expected to be 32,608. Each class must have at least one teacher and there must be at least one reserved hand for meeting situations arising out of casual and other leave of absences. Hence the minimum of seven teachers will be required for every six-class primary school. The total number of teachers then will be 2,28,256 ( $32,608 \times 7$ ). The minimum salary of a primary school teacher should be Rs. 400. Hence the possible total expenditure under this head will be Rs. 9,13,02,400. The amount of money required for the construction of 1,200 new primary school buildings each year at the rate of Rs. 75,000 ( $\text{Rs. } 75,000 \times 1200$  is Rs. 9,00,00,000. The total capital expenditure in 4 years for the construction of new school buildings is expected to be Rs. 36,00,00,000 ( $\text{Rs. } 9,00,00,000 \times 4$ ). For renovating 27,808 [ $32,608 - 4,800$  ( $1200 \times 4$ )] old and dilapidated buildings the amount of

\*\* West Bengal Legislative Assembly Proceedings dated 19.3.79; budget speeches delivered by Hon'ble Ministers Mr. Sambhu Ghosh, Minister for Higher Education and Mr. Partha Dey, Minister-in-Charge of Primary and Secondary Education.



money required will be Rs. 27,80,80,000 ( $27,808 \times \text{Rs. } 10,000$ ). Rs. 2,000 will be needed for contingency each year for each school at the rate of Rs. 200 per month for ten months. Hence the total expenditure for contingency in 4 years is expected to be Rs. 26,08,64,000 ( $32,608 \times \text{Rs. } 2000 = \text{Rs. } 6,52,16,000 \times 4$ ). By deducting expenditure for 3,600 schools ( $1200 \times 3$ ) the net total expenditure for contingency will be Rs. 25,36,64,000 (Rs. 26,08,64,000 - Rs. 72,00,000).

Effective expansion of mass education through primary schools depend on universal provision, universal enrolment and universal retention of pupils.

(2) Not only expansion but also qualitative improvement is also a long felt need. Very little will be achieved unless the right type of teacher is available for the school. Teachers in primary schools must be at least trained matriculates if not more. The present training facilities for teachers are not sufficient. There are only 65 training institutions for both primary and basic school teachers with a total intake capacity of 6,526 per year.\*\*\* 48% of the primary teachers are still untrained and non-matric. To ensure the availability of adequately trained teachers for primary schools necessary funds must be provided for a thorough overhauling of the system of training for the primary teachers. More and better equipped training institutions must be established without delay. Their curriculum needs reorientation. Practice teaching should be emphasised and revitalised. Since teacher education is vital for improving standards in all education, the Govt. of India should assume a special responsibility for improving teacher education and providing liberal funds for it. Level of general education of primary teachers should also be raised. Continuing programme of general education for primary teachers is also needed. The improvement of professional efficiency of teachers is equally important. In-service training will have to be provided for all teachers on well-organised and institutional basis. The scale

|                                       |     |    |
|---------------------------------------|-----|----|
| ***Junior Basic Training Institutions | ... | 47 |
| Senior Training Colleges              | ... | 8  |
| Primary Training Schools              | ... | 8  |
| Teachers' Training Colleges           | ... | 2  |
| Total                                 | ... | 65 |



of pay for the primary teachers should also be raised, so that a better type of people may be drawn for the schools. The present machinery for ensuring regularity of payment to primary teachers through the Nationalised Banks is no doubt welcome. This is the only desirable device by which the teachers can receive their miserable pittance (Rs. 325.00) at regular intervals. All elementary teachers should have the same remuneration, old-age benefits and conditions of service. Still we find 2,000 single-teacher schools in this state. The present teacher-pupil ratio is 1 : 40. The optimum should be 1 : 25. The total number of teachers at present in Bengal is 1,45,499. The total number of school-going children in the age-group 6-14 is 1,09,79,800 (Boys-55,57,600 ; Girls-54,22,200). But the number of actual enrolment is 59,52,000.\*

The principle of conversion of ordinary primary schools into Junior Basic Schools was laid down in 1951 by the Central Advisory Board of Education. Increased financial implications stood in the way of translating the idea into practice. Only 7% progress has been made since then.

(3) Democratic and socialistic societies emphasise mass education on the principle of equality of educational opportunity. The two most important requisites in this respect are (a) making primary education free and (b) providing opportunity to every child to receive education. The first one is said to have been fulfilled, but the second one is yet to be achieved. Still there are large number of primary schools under private management. Better type of education can be purchased by well-to-do sections of the society whereas lakhs of children living in the slum areas of Calcutta, in the interior villages and in the hill areas of Darjeeling and the forest areas of Sundarbans are deprived of education. To remove this mounting discrimination in respect of educational opportunities nationalisation of education is an imperative need. A uniform pattern of elementary schools and education should be adopted. There should be only one type of schools under the direct management and financial control of the Govt. Common schooling is desirable to ensure equality

\*5. Data as supplied by the Directorate of Primary Education, Govt. of West Bengal.



of educational opportunity. No discrimination should be made in respect of sex, caste, creed and economic status. Primary education is now generally free for those who are not intent on purchasing it dear. It is the policy of the Government to provide text books free of cost to every child. But the supply system of text books is hopeless in West Bengal. Delay in the publication and distribution of text books is a general complain. There should be a buffer stock for at least one year at the sub-divisional level to tide over this difficult problem efficiently. Sufficient number of scholarship should be awarded to poor but meritorious students. Free or subsidised tiffin should be provided to all children on all working days. Many schools work in unhygienic conditions. There should be at least one room for each class apart from the office room. Proper arrangements for sanitation and drinking water should exist in the school campus. Physical education and medical check-up of the future generations of the nation are far from satisfactory. Many schools suffer from inadequate and obsolete equipments. In rural areas a large number of pupils have to travel more than a mile in rains or heat to attend school.

(4) Curriculum forms an essential part of any efficient scheme of education. Complaints had been made in the past as regards the unsuitability of the primary school curriculum. The main charges were : it was better suited to the urban population ; it could not fulfil the needs of the rural folk ; it was not self-contained and only intended to meet the needs of higher education and clerical professions and it was mainly theoretical and without any work orientation. No doubt, the framing of suitable curriculum is an age long problem and it is absolutely under the jurisdiction of the Govt. One good thing in this regard is that the over-weightage of English which was the heritage of British rule in the sphere of primary education has been eliminated through its abolition at the primary stage. The decision is desirable, significant and far-reaching. At this stage the medium of instruction is the vernacular. This is desirable as an essential ingredient of a national system of education. But in the cosmopolitan city of Calcutta the media of instruction number many more



of the vernaculars—Bengali, Hindi, Urdu and English, Tamil, Telegu, Oria, Gujrati etc. The first three languages act as the media of instruction in the Corporation managed primary schools. A Curriculum Committee has been set up by the Govt. for reorientation of the primary school curriculum. It has submitted its report to direct primary education in the desirable channels and providing it a scientific basis.

(5) General apathy of the people or lack of motivation towards primary education is a traditional obstacle in the way of its expansion. Large scale propaganda through the various mass media of communication such as press, platform, television, private social institutions is needed to remove this age-long apathy. Unless parents are educated and enlightened to feel the need for education of their children the problem of mass illiteracy cannot be tackled successfully. Early implementation of the adult education programmes under the 6th Five Year Plan is highly needed. 200 crores of rupees or 10 per cent of the total educational outlay is earmarked for this purpose in the draft 6th Five Year Plan. This is no doubt a bold step towards liquidation of mass illiteracy. It is better late than never. But theoretical provision and practical implementation are entirely two different things. Let us hope for the better. The hopeful sign is that ice is gradually melting. There has been a general awakening in the masses to the need for education. The growth of a political consciousness has rudely shaken their placed complacency and they are now demanding that their children should not be denied the education which had so long been the monopoly of the upper middle classes particularly the Bhadrалoks.

#### **Conclusion :**

The importance of a true and well-organised educational system in the life of an individual as well as in the life of a nation is immense and need not be over emphasised. The edifice of a national system of education can be built up on the foundation of primary education of the masses. It is regarded as the stepping or corner-stone of national educational superstructure.



But Primary education in West Bengal is administered under several legislative acts unrelated to one another viz., the Urban Primary Education Act of 1919, the Rural Primary Education Act of 1930, the Bengal Municipal Act of 1932, the Calcutta Municipal Act of 1951, the Urban Primary Education Act of 1963 and the West Bengal Panchayet Act of 1973. There is as yet no State Board for Primary Education as recommended by the Kothari Commission and as embodied in the Primary Education Act of 1973. The Act has been cold stored for all practical purposes. A comprehensive act is the need of the hour. Fortunately the present Govt. is fully conscious of this need and work has been going on in this direction. Calcutta area had been kept out of the operation of the Primary Education Act of 1963. Dyarchy (between Govt. and Corporation) in respect of educational administration in the city of Calcutta still persists. Percentage of literacy in Calcutta city area is 60.4. 40 per cent are outside the orbit of primary education. This is regrettable even after thirtyfour years of independence. Thus the state of things in Calcutta where modern education had first found its roots is the worst. Large number of slum areas are without primary schools or with some schools only in name. The English medium schools charge high fees and do not care for Government aid or recognition. The condition of the municipal areas is worse than before. Under the Primary Education Act of 1963 the local Self-Governing bodies were permitted to levy an education cess at the rate of 2 per cent on the annual value of holdings. But little concrete has yet been achieved. The percentage of literacy in the municipal areas is little over 50. Out of 93 Municipalities in West Bengal only 18 have declared primary education free. The State Government has very little scope of intervention in case of failure of Municipal bodies. The State of things in urban and rural areas differ widely indeed. More than 60 per cent children in rural areas are out of the circuit of compulsion. Wastage is appalling in the villages. Effective inspection is still a far cry.

It is regrettable that a large amount of time and money was wasted in the past on schemes and efforts that have not appreciably increased literacy and have proved largely in-



fructuous. The one real achievement is the recognition of the need for free, compulsory and universal primary education and the translation of this recognition into law. As a result of this a large number of unplanned and inefficient schools came into being. Schools of a very low grade, schools without a progressive and dynamic curriculum, schools without requisite buildings and equipments, schools without provisions of games and physical education, schools with one teacher, teachers without a living wage, teachers without proper training, schools under no adequate control, schools with no effective inspection, schools without sufficient financial support—these are the real problems in the field of primary education in this state. The sad thing is that many of these problems are old and many of the solutions offered to-day were offered generations ago. The conception of school as the centre of village community or the idea of present village Panchayet school can be traced back to the days of Rev. William Adam and subsequently Sir Philip Hartog. A local cess for education was levied even more than a century ago by the Stanley Despatch of 1859. Primary education cess was imposed by the Primary (Urban) Education Act of 1919, the Primary (Rural) Education Act of 1930, the Urban Primary Education Act of 1963 but the progress of mass education is far from satisfactory.

People no doubt have become more conscious and given up their apathy. The Government of Welfare State in free India has also become more responsible than earlier. Yet the progress of mass literacy in West Bengal is not upto expectation. Still she lags behind other states in India. The percentage of literacy in West Bengal is only 33.00 (as per 1971 Census). It is 60.42 in Kerala, 30.46 in Tamil Nadu, 39.18 in Maharashtra, 35.79 in Gujarat and 33.67 in Punjab. Thus, her position in respect of literacy is 6th. Illiteracy in the womenfolk is appalling. Female literacy is only 22.1 whereas male literacy is 42.8.

Introduction of free, compulsory and universal primary education in West Bengal is overdue. To provide free elementary education to all children in the age group 6-14 is a Constitutional obligation. The present percentage of enrolment in the age-group 6-14 is 54.2 and hence 45.8 per cent



in the age-group 6-14 is out of the circuit of any education.\* In the matter of financing also West Bengal lags behind other States. If the earlier primary education acts, rules and regulations were implemented in right earnest and in proper coordination, the condition of primary education in this state might have entirely been different. The Government, the local bodies, the social workers and every educated individual should join hands to fight the menace of mass illiteracy and try to bring back the rosy days of Bengal which Mr. G. K. Gokhale praised so high.

The apathetic and indifferent attitude towards the millions of children who will in future actively participate in multifarious national activities as creative citizens of the country is deplorable. The task of giving elementary education to the masses has been entrusted to the State Government. But the State Government with its limited financial resources is not expected to discharge its duties and responsibilities properly in this regard. The national Govt. should come forward to solve effectively this national problem. Under Article 45 of the Constitution it is the duty of the national Govt. to make suitable provision for elementary education for the age-group 6-14. Hence the national Govt. can not evade or shirk its responsibility in educating the masses of this sub-continent. Any well-planned scheme of primary education involves financial obligation which should be borne by the Central Government. The present financial relations between the Central and the State Govts. should be reoriented and re-shaped. Expansion and improvement of primary education should be viewed and administered in the light of the changing relation of the Centre and the State Governments.

The educational impact of the present study is immense and far-reaching. It may tremendously help the educational experts and administrators of our country in shaping the future educational set-up and nature of educational administration in India. The study of the period under consideration is not only historically interesting but also edu-

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\* Data as supplied by the Directorate of Primary Education, Government of West Bengal.



cationally significant. It may greatly help us to understand properly the problems of educational administration even to-day. Educational administration is again intimately connected with educational finance which played a predominant part in shaping the educational pattern in India.

**Lessons that may be drawn of the findings :**

At this stage we should note that the impact of our enquiry will remain incomplete unless we draw lessons from the findings we have made so far. The lessons of history will be helpful to the future educational administrators from both administrative and financial points of view. The present is the child of the past and it leads to the future.

Mr. Biss in the beginning of this century had proposed a separate D.P.I. for Primary Education. Fortunately this has recently been done and the administration of Primary Education has gained a new dimension. Similarly the Primary Education Act of 1930 had suggested a Central Primary Education Committee. The constitution of such a Committee is a long-felt need. This should immediately be constituted under whatever name (because during dyarchy there was absence of a central authority and a directive, which affected Primary Education adversely).

To establish common schooling, to remove the mounting discrimination in respect of educational opportunities and to guard against inequality of all types a National System of Primary Education is an imperative need. We must achieve a uniform and unified system at least at state level and at an early date.

Completion of Primary Education was often referred to as the standard of functional literacy. We should adopt this ideal and sooner the better. The greatest obstacle in this way was the huge wastage and stagnation inherent in the Primary Education system and of which the Hartog Committee Report spoke so loudly and frequently. This is equally true even to-day. The Report had referred to a large number of causes and suggested remedial measures. To solve effectively the mounting problem of mass illiteracy the menace of wastage and stagnation should be tackled carefully and immediately. The problem requires sincere



and effective solution by the educational administrators.

*Inspection and supervision* is an essential part of good and effective administration. The period of Dyarchy had established a hierarchy of inspectors—Divisional, Assistant Divisional, District, Sub-Divisional, Sub-Inspectors, Assistant Sub-Inspectors etc. Some strata in the hierarchy have now been abolished. But the basic set-up still remains almost similar. Proper reorganisation of the Inspectorate in West Bengal should immediately be attempted. During the period under study one Sub-Inspector had to inspect about 300 schools. Although the number of schools has been appreciably reduced, the burden is still prohibitive.

About the *Inspectorate* it had been often suggested without effect that  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Inspectors should be selected from amongst Headmasters and another  $\frac{1}{4}$  from middle school teachers, and the inspectorate should guide and inspire the teachers. These issues should be favourably considered without delay inasmuch as without effective inspection no scheme of primary education can be successful both in respect of quality and quantity.

There had often been criticisms against the grant of a paltry amount of Rs. 10 for *contingencies*. The amount has since been raised to Rs. 25. Yet, in view of the present price-line, the grant for contingencies should considerably be increased (at least Rs. 100 per month).

Times, without number, were references made to *unsatisfactory quality of teaching partially caused by very low salaries of teachers* (maximum Rs. 20/- for Headmaster and Rs. 15/- for Assistant Teachers). Salaries have been raised thereafter by doses, but more requires to be done. Quality of teaching remains almost the same. Without honourable, decent and living remuneration to primary teachers the quality of teaching can never be improved. Satisfactory remuneration, conditions of service and the quality of teaching are intimately related. The minimum salary of a primary teacher should be Rs. 400/-. Properly trained, efficient, talented and dedicated teachers can only improve the quality of teaching.

Some much-debated questions had plagued the development of primary education during the period under study. These may be stated here in brief :



(a) *The Provincial Govt. was dependent upon the Central Govt. for financial assistance.* But the latter was anathema to the cause of mass education and it always tried to take shelter under the constitutional reforms. It pleaded that under the Mont-Ford Reforms education was a transferred subject and as such the Central Govt. had no constitutional obligation in this respect.

(b) *The local self-governing bodies, on the other hand, were dependent on the provincial Govt. for financial support.* But the provincial Govt. pleaded its inability to come forward with its limited and scanty resources.

(c) *Under the Mont-Ford Reforms the public utility services including education were transferred subjects which were starved financially* for the sake of the reserved ones.

(d) *There was constant controversy both in the press and on the platform regarding cess and taxation* for the purpose of education. This had its sure repercussion on the people. Newspapers often opposed cess. Consequently the corporation, the Municipalities and the District Boards had to face deficit budgets. Loans from Govt. were seldom available. *This financial insolvency of the local self-governing bodies has its legacy even today.*

(e) *Centre-Province financial arrangement was most unsatisfactory and unacceptable to the provinces.* There was a strong and persistent demand for provincialisation of Excise, Customs (specially jute and tea) and Income Tax (at least a part thereof). The Central Govt. was very much unwilling to spend substantially for Primary Education. So far as capital expenditure was concerned it was ready to provide the necessary grants. But in respect of *recurring grants* its attitude was almost rigid and unfavourable. The recurring expenditure had thus always been a stumbling block. The problem still continues the same without satisfactory solution. The financial relation between the centre and the states needs overhauling and reorientation.

(f) *The Mont-Ford Reforms were followed by an uneven and uncertain distribution of financial resources* between the centre and the provinces. There was a constant charge and not without reasons that Bengal was most shabbily and unjustly treated in the Meston Award which was admitted even



by the then Govt. of Bengal. The nationalist grievance was that Bengal was treated as a colony by the Govt. of India. Even to-day the situation has not changed substantially.

(g) *In Bengal, tuition fees had met a high percentage of educational expenditure.* It was highest in comparison to other provinces in India. But the Central Govt. shifted the entire responsibility in this regard on the shoulders of the Bengal Govt. It charged of lack of initiative on the part of the Bengal Govt. and the Local Self-Governing bodies and accused her of spending much too less than she could. On the other hand the nationalist view was that *police expenditure superseded educational expenditure.* At present, the Govt. of West Bengal declared Secondary Education free. But the 5th & 6th Plans cried a halt to this trend of free education at secondary level.

(h) *Primary Education, in the studied period had been at the mercy of the Bureaucracy.* The Biss Scheme had been opposed by the Divisional Inspectors. (It was said that the Biss Scheme was ideally perfect but practically unattainable and unworkable, because it was too ambitious !). Educational administration is still in the hands of the traditional bureaucracy. Though the attitude of the bureaucracy has been changed considerably since then, the basic structure remains the same. So the administration of Primary Education should be freed from the unholy control of the bureaucracy and made democratic as far as possible. History should not be repeated in this regard.

(i) *Wide disparity in respect of educational opportunities* had always existed between town and village. Similarly "special schools" always remained for the economically better off sections of the society. Schools in Calcutta Corporation area remained almost out of bounds for Govt. inspection. The teachers in these schools enjoyed a fairer deal which created a feeling of frustration and injustice in other teachers.

(j) *There as an unending controversy between voluntary system and compulsory system.* The matter has not yet been settled satisfactorily and Primary Education has not been made compulsory throughout the state. Compulsion is still a far cry in this state and without it universalisation of primary education is almost an impossibility.



*Suggestions* had been made for (1) *a rural bias in the curriculum* (2) *removal of English at the primary stage* (it might be retained as an additional subject in the top two classes), (3) *introduction of a common curriculum* and, a uniform pattern of primary schools, (4) *appointment of Honorary Inspectors* to establish a close link between the school and the enlightened public, (5) *introduction of medical benefits for pupils*, (6) *development of the school as the village welfare centre* and the school house as the village hall. These demands of history still remain unfulfilled and call for immediate fulfilment. The newly drafted syllabus will meet part of the problems but the remaining ones are yet to be solved.

Complaints had been made as regards the unsuitability of the primary school curriculum. The main charges were : it was better suited to the urban population, it could not fulfil the needs of the rural folk; primary education was divorced from rural environment in the rural areas ; it was not self-contained and mainly theoretical and without any work or vocational orientation. The need for a vocational orientation of the curriculum was often recognised. Yet nothing was done. The newly drafted curriculum may fulfil this objective partly. But more remains to be done.

Things have improved in some aspects in course of the last few years. But problems are many and any real success depends upon the solution of those problems. Lessons must be drawn from the past so that the future may be well planned.

Education should not be merely a means to improving the conditions of life; it should be life itself. The social spirit must permeate the entire range of education and school itself should form a community. The activities of the pupils should be regulated by the common end to do more service to the country and to humanity. Each school should feel that it is a social centre and impress upon the minds of every pupil his immense responsibility for the improvement of the social, political and economic conditions of the country. Education is the greatest national investment. School is the only agency to remedy the multifarious social evils. It can help immensely to bring social cohesion and national integration. Powers of the individual need greater development than before because every individual is an integral part of the society. In-



dividual self and social self are intimately related. For fullest development and highest enrichment of an individual, his social self also is to be developed. He should develop his powers and try to realise himself in society and not outside it. No individual can develop in a vacuum. The nomads can not develop a higher type of culture. For thinking minds to blossom and for arts and sciences to flourish the most essential thing is a settled society. He should, therefore, try to improve the agencies. In a socialistic and democratic country the state conditions of society and ultimately the State itself. The state should, therefore, spend larger sums than before in providing agencies. In a socialistic and democratic country the state should, therefore, spend larger sums than before in providing opportunities for this purpose through suitable administrative agencies. In a socialistic and democratic country the state has an obligation to provide educational privileges for the fullest development of its members. Throughout the world every civilised Government now accepts it as a sacred obligation to provide for free and compulsory education of its people. Without an enlightened and intelligent electorate no democratic order can work successfully. A suitably oriented system of education can facilitate and promote social change in the desirable direction and contribute to economic growth by creating requisite attitudes and aptitudes for specific tasks of development. In 1910 Mr. G. K. Gokhale very eloquently remarked : "This question of compulsory and free primary education is now in this country the question of questions. The well-being of millions and millions of children who are waiting to be brought under the humanising influence of education depends upon it. The increased efficiency of the individual, the higher general level of intelligence, the stiffening of the moral backbone of large sections of the community, rapid national progress in all directions—social, political and economic, none of these things can come without education. In fact, the whole of our future as a nation is inextricably bound up with it." It is, therefore, no exaggeration to say that at the present moment primary education is at the heart of the whole problem of reconstruction in free India.



APPENDIX I

GOVERNMENT OF BENGAL  
GENERAL DEPARTMENT

Progs. No. 366

EDUCATION

No. 172T.Edn.

From the Hon'ble Mr. L. S. S. O'malley, C.I.E. I.C.S.  
Secretary to the Government of Bengal.

To the Secretary to the Government of India,  
Department of Education.

Dated Darjeeling, the 18th May, 1920.

Sir,

I am directed to refer to your letter No. 750, dated the 2nd September 1918 enquiring how far the scheme formulated by the Government of India in 1917 for the expansion of primary education among the male population in India is generally feasible in this province, regard being had to the changed conditions consequent on the reforms scheme and to the fact *that provincial Govts will no longer be able to expect any subventions from Imperial funds.\**

2. In accordance with the provisions of section 3 of the Primary Education Act, the Municipalities of Bengal have been requested to submit returns showing the total number of children aged 6 to 10, the number actually attending primary schools and the provision now made for elementary education e.g. the schools in existence, their accommodation, staff and equipment. They have also been asked to prepare a programme for providing education for all children aged 6 to 11 likely to attend schools voluntarily and also for all boys aged 6 to 11, together with an estimate of cost for each of these programmes and a statement of the methods by which the cost

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\* Emphasised by the author.



can be met. Returns, under the Act, are being received, but are not yet complete. When they are complete, the Govt. of Bengal propose to review the whole situation with reference to the conditions and resources of each Municipality as well as the extent to which it is prepared to bear the cost of providing for a complete system of primary education.

3. In the meantime, a scheme for the improvement and extension of primary education in the town of Calcutta has been prepared by the Director of Public Instruction which has received the approval of the Calcutta Corporation. The scheme provides for :—

- i. the establishment of a training college for 100 teachers ;
- ii. the building of 13 model boys' school each accommodating 350 boys and 1 model girls' school for 200 girls ;
- iii. the improvement annually of 5 per cent of the existing boys' schools as well as of girls' schools ; and
- iv. the taking over and improvement of such new schools as spring up every year.

The capital expenditure is estimated at approximately 20 lakhs and the annual recurring cost at 4½ lakhs. *Financial exigencies have precluded this Govt. from accepting the proposal of the Corporation that both the capital and the recurring expenditure should be equally apportioned between Govt. and the Corporation.\** The Corporation has, however, been informed that if it will provide the recurring cost, Government will be prepared :—

1. to meet the whole of the capital cost of the training college, estimated at Rs. 2,68,197 ;
2. to contribute Rs. 10,000 annually for three years towards the recurring cost of training college ; and
3. to provide three-quarters of the capital cost of the rest of the scheme, the balance being provided by the Corporation.

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\* Emphasized by the author.



In anticipation of this proposal being accepted by the Corporation, the sum of Rs. 3 lakhs has been provided in the current year's education budget.

4. As regards rural areas, I am to report that progress is being made with the Panchayati Union Scheme initiated by the last Govt. of Eastern Bengal and Assam. This scheme aims at providing every Panchayati Union with a lower primary school of an improved type to be managed and maintained by the District Board. After the constitution of the Bengal Presidency, *it was decided to extend the system to Western Bengal, but it had to be suspended after the year 1914-15 owing to financial stringency caused by the war.* It has now been revived with the help of an allotment of Rs. 1,20,000 from the recurring Imperial grant of Rs. 5½ lakhs, which admits of 120 new Panchayati Union schools for boys being opened annually. The number must, however, decline every year, unless more funds are available because the amount required on account of maintenance charges will increase,\* as more schools are opened and the amount available for capital expenditure is consequently reduced. There are altogether 7,580 Panchayati Union in the Presidency of which 2,874 have been provided with union primary schools, while 2,580 are already in possession of good primary schools, so that the scheme has still to be extended to 2,126 unions. The completion of the scheme in a reasonable time depends on larger grants being made available, and these grants, the Govt. of Bengal are not at present in a position to provide.\*

5. It is clear that if there is to be expansion of primary education in rural areas, in which over nine-tenths of the people of Bengal reside, the District Boards must contribute to the cost as well as Government. It would, however, serve no useful purpose to approach them on the subject till Govt. is in a position to state what share of the cost it is prepared to bear ; and in this respect, a difficulty is presented by the fact that it is not as yet possible to predict what the financial resources of Bengal will be under the reforms scheme.

\* Emphasized by the author.



Apart from this, *the Governor in Council doubts whether the Government as now constituted could commit themselves to any scheme, involving the hypothecation of large sums, which the Govt. constituted under the reforms scheme might not accept.\*.*

6. In the meantime, it is proposed to have a survey made by a special officer of the existing facilities for primary education in each district, on the basis of which a 10 years programme of expansion and an estimate of cost will be prepared which will be referred to the District Boards for their opinion. Proposals for the financing of the scheme will then be worked out and laid before the Minister.

I have the honour to be,  
Sir,

Your most obedient servant  
Sd/- Illegible.

## APPENDIX II

File No. 1-E-18(6)-1922

No. 560, dated Calcutta, the 8th March 1921.

From : Secretary to the Government of Bengal,  
Education Department.

To : The Chairman of the Corporation of Calcutta.

I am directed to refer to your *letter No. S. 2095, dated the 21st August, 1920* regarding the scheme for the improvement of Primary Education in Calcutta. The Corporation of Calcutta accept the apportionment of the cost of the scheme suggested in my letter No. 554, dated the 9th March, 1920, subject to the condition that Govt. reconsider the question of contributing to the recurring, as well as to the capital cost of the scheme. The Corporation expressed the desire that *a start should be made at once with the scheme and that the*

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\* Emphasized by the author.



*first year's programme of improvement should be taken up immediately.\** It is understood that notwithstanding the reservation above mentioned they will be prepared to carry out this part of the agreement and bear the recurring expenditure if Govt. are unable to contribute to it.

2. In reply, I am to say that Govt. have carefully considered the question whether it would be possible for them to make a contribution towards the recurring expenditure, and that *they regret that financial stringency precludes them from acceding to the request of the Corporation.\** The Govt. of Bengal (in the Ministry of Education) sympathizes with the desire of the Corporation that an early start should be made with the scheme and sanction is now conveyed to the payment of a grant of Rs. 3 lakhs to the Corporation during the current year.

I am at the same time to explain that a reply *could not be given to your letter at an earlier date as a reference had to be made to the Secretary of State (this was the fate of a colony!) for sanction to the expenditure proposed by the Govt. This sanction has now been obtained.\**

3. It is observed that the Corporation agree to the constitution of a general committee to advise it in regard to the supervision and control of primary education in Calcutta. It is presumed that the Corporation will now take steps to constitute such a committee and Govt. will be glad to agree to Govt. officers serving on it. I am to request that a report may be submitted showing the composition proposed for the Committee.

"That is be recommended that the General Committee proposed to be constituted by Government to advise the Corporation in regard to the supervision and control of primary education in Calcutta be composed of 12 members as follows :

1-10—The Chairman of the Corporation and 9 Commissioners to be elected by the Corporation of whom at least one should be a European, one a Muhammadan and

\* Emphasized by the author.



one a Marwari, 11—Inspector of Schools, Presidency Division.

12—Another Officer of the Education Department to be nominated by Government."

## APPENDIX III

File No. 1-E-18(1)—1922

No. S. 2095, dated Calcutta, the 21st Aug. 1920.

From : Chairman of Corporation of Calcutta.

To : The Secretary to the Govt. of Bengal,  
General Department (Edn.).

I have the honour to invite a reference to the correspondence ending with your letter No. 554, dated the 9th March, 1920, in which you conveyed the approval of Govt. to the scheme prepared by Mr. T. O. D. Dunn for the improvement of Primary Education in Calcutta, and communicated their views in regard to the question of the apportionment of cost between Govt. and the Corporation.

2. The scheme contemplates a programme of expenditure spread over five years, and will, it is estimated, involve a capital expenditure of Rs. 20<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> lakhs (after taking into account the sum of one lakh which, it is understood, will be available from the Newson Trust) and an annual recurring expenditure of Rs. 4<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> lakhs when it is in full operation. *The Corporation suggested that both the capital and the recurring expenditure should be shared equally between them and Government.\** With reference to this suggestion, you observe that, having regard to their financial circumstances, Govt. are not in a position to enter into an undertaking to bear any share of the recurring expenditure. They offer, instead, to bear the entire capital cost of the training college for teachers, which is estimated at Rs. 2,68,200 and three-fourths of the capital cost of the rest of the scheme. On the basis of the present estimate, the contribution of Govt. under

\* Emphasized by the author.



the latter head will amount to about Rs. 13½ lakhs. In addition to these sums Govt. also offer to contribute Rs. 10,000 a year for three years towards the cost of the maintenance of the training College, which will amount to Rs. 42,000 a year. You enquire whether these proposals commend themselves to the Corporation.

3. The matter has been carefully considered by *Primary Education Special Committee and by the Corporation and the Commissioners regret that Govt. can not see their way to bear any portion of the recurring expenditure.\** They desire to point out that while the liability on account of capital cost can always be more or less definitely ascertained, and will only involve periodic payments, the recurring expenditure is a somewhat indeterminate figure, and may, the Commissioners apprehend, impose a constantly growing burden on their resources if, as is not unlikely, the present programme of improvement should require expansion or if it is hereafter found necessary to make primary education in Calcutta free and compulsory. The Commissioners, therefore, feel considerable diffidence in accepting a liability, the full extent of which can not be gauged at present, and they prefer an arrangement under which they can share this liability with Govt. Even taking the scheme as it stands, without any reference to the possibilities of future expansion and development, the commissioners would point out that according to the apportionment suggested by Govt. the latter would contribute only about Rs. 16½ lakhs towards the scheme (Rs. 16¼ lakhs for capital cost and Rs. 30,000 towards maintenance of training college for three years) against which the Corporation would have to contribute about Rs. 4½ lakhs towards the capital cost, and in addition bear almost the entire recurring expenditure which in the fifth year will amount to Rs. 4¾ lakhs a year and will thereafter go on increasing by about Rs. 16,000 annually. *The arrangement suggested will, as will be seen, impose on the Corporation a much heavier burden than Government will have to bear, and is, the Commissioners submit, hardly equitable.\** Having regard to these facts the Commissioners

\* Emphasized by the author.



will be glad if Govt. will be pleased to reconsider the matter and accept liability for a share of the recurring expenditure as well.

4. If, however, Government can not see their way to bear any portion of the recurring expenditure, the Commissioners are prepared to accept tentatively the apportionment of cost suggested by Government and they are anxious and desire that a start should be made at once\* and that the first year's programme of improvement should be taken up immediately. It is understood that Govt. have provided Rs. 3 lakhs in the current budget for expenditure in this connection and the Corporation have earmarked Rs. 5 lakhs for the improvement of primary education so that there is no financial difficulty in making a start\*.

5. While they make the foregoing suggestion to obviate further delay in taking the scheme in hand, the Commissioners feel it incumbent upon them to bring to the notice of Government in this connection that the corporation are about to embark on an expensive project for the improvement of the water-supply, which is estimated to cost about Rs. 3 crores and will, on completion, invoke an additional expenditure of about Rs. 22 lakhs a year for loan charges which will absorb for the next few years the bulk of the annual increase at rates. Other schemes and measures which will add to the Corporation's expenditure are the proposed creation of a city Veterinary Department, the development of child welfare and maternity work, measures for the improvement of milk supply, the introduction of motor transport for the removal of refuse, the increase in establishment charges owing to the revision of salaries, wages, etc. In view of these additional items of expenditure and the growing cost of the city services owing to the high prices of materials and other causes, the Commissioners may eventually find that the expenditure they have to bear in connection with primary education is beyond the resources they can command. If such a contingency should arise they may be obliged to approach Government for a revision of the arrangements now proposed and for more liberal financial

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\* Emphasized by the author.



assistance and they hope that any representation they may make on the subject will receive favourable consideration. The Corporation may also find it necessary to spread the expenditure over a longer period and it is hoped that Govt. will have no objection.

6. In the discussions in connection with this matter last September the amount which Government now spend in grants to primary schools was taken as a partial set-off against the recurring expenditure. It is understood that this sum will be available in addition to the contributions expressly stated in your letter under reply.

7. The Commissioners recognise that the appointment of a joint statutory committee, such as they suggested, consisting of representatives of the Corporation and Government to exercise control over primary education would not be admissible under the existing Calcutta Municipal Act, and pending the amendments of the law, they agree with Government that a General Committee be constituted under executive orders to advise the Corporation in regard to the supervision and control of primary education in Calcutta.

#### APPENDIX IV

Progs. No. 367 Letter No. 1667 Edn.

From : The Hon'ble Mr. L. S. S. O'Malley, C.I.E., I.C.S.,  
Secretary to the Government of Bengal.

To : The Secretary to the Government of India,  
Department of Education.

Calcutta, the 16 November 1920.

Sir,

I am directed to invite a reference to paragraph 3 of my letter No. 172 T/Edn. dated the 18th May 1920, in which it was reported that a scheme for the improvement and extension of primary education in the town of Calcutta was under the consideration of this Government. The nature of the scheme was explained and it was stated that the capital expenditure



was estimated at approximately 20 lakhs and the annual recurring cost at 4½ lakhs.

2. The Corporation was informed that if it would provide the recurring cost this Government would be prepared—

- (1) to meet the whole of the capital cost of the training college estimated at Rs. 2,68,197 ;
- (2) to contribute Rs. 10,000 annually for three years towards the recurring cost of the training college; and
- (3) to provide three-fourths of the capital cost of the rest of the scheme, the balance being provided by the Corporation.

I am to add that the expenditure will be spread over 5 years and that the capital cost is now estimated at 20¾ lakhs while the annual recurring expenditure will amount to 4¾ lakhs when the scheme is in full operation.

3. The Corporation of Calcutta has accepted the apportionment mentioned above, subject to the condition that the Government of Bengal reconsider the question of contributing to the recurring as well as the capital cost of the scheme. The Corporation has at the same time expressed a desire that a start should be made at once with the scheme and that the first year's programme of improvement should be taken up immediately.

4. *The financial position of the Government of Bengal and the other urgent demands which they have to meet preclude them from acceding to the request of the Corporation, and they are not in a position to make any promise of a contribution to the recurring cost of the scheme.\** According to the apportionment accepted by the Corporation the total contribution which this Government propose to make will amount to about 16½ lakhs of rupees spread over five years. The sanction of the Government of India is necessary to a grant of this amount under rule III 10(12)(b) of their Finance Department Resolution No. 361 E. A. dated the 14th July, 1916 and I am accord-

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\* Emphasized by the author.



ingly to request that the Government of India may be moved to sanction the expenditure at an early date.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

Sd/- S. S. Malley

Secretary to the Government of Bengal.

#### APPENDIX V

#### EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

##### Edn. Branch.

**Progs. No. 368, Letter No. 1543 dated Delhi, the 22nd December, 1920.**

To

The Secretary to the Govt. of Bengal,  
General (Education) Department.

Sir,

I am directed to reply to your letter No. 1667-Bin. dated the 16th November 1920, on the subject of the improvement and extension of primary education in the town of Calcutta.

2. The arrangement made between the Govt. of Bengal and the Corporation of Calcutta is that the Local Government will contribute 16½ lakhs spread over 5 years to the capital cost of the scheme. This sum amounting to approximately three-fourths of the capital cost estimated at 20¾ lakhs will bear the whole of the capital cost of the Training College estimated at Rs. 2,68,197 and will contribute Rs. 10,000 annually for three years towards the recurring cost of the Training College. On the other hand, the Corporation will bear the remainder of the capital cost and the whole of the recurring cost of the scheme, save the Rs. 10,000 to which allusion has just been made. It is assumed that the Corporation will be responsible for the recurring cost of the Training College over and above Rs. 10,000 and for the whole cost after the expiry of the first



three years. It is also observed that the Corporation have accepted this distribution of cost, subject to a condition that the Government of Bengal reconsider the question of contributing to the recurring cost of the scheme. *The Govt. of India understand that, notwithstanding this reservation, the Corporation will carry out its part of the agreement and will meet the recurring charges.\**

3. On this understanding the Govt. of India are prepared to recommend for the sanction of the Secretary of State the expenditure proposed by the Local Government. At the same time, I am to observe that a scheme of such magnitude as this might suitably have been submitted for consideration by the Minister appointed under the reforms before it was submitted to the Govt. of India. While hesitating therefore to withhold their support, the Govt. of India suggest that the scheme should be submitted to the Minister as soon as possible after his appointment and that any modifications in it which may be decided upon as the result of his views may be reported to the Government of India. A telegram will then be issued to the Secretary of State.

I have &c.,

Sd/- Mahara, Singh,

Offg. Secretary.

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\* Emphasized by the author.



## APPENDIX VI

List of Transferred subjects as set out in  
Schedule II to Rule 6 of the Devolution  
Rules under the Govt. of India Act, 1919.

1. Local Self-Government.
2. Medical Administration.
3. Public Health and Sanitation.
- \*4. **Education** (excluding education of Europeans and Anglo-Indians).
5. Public Works (Roads, Buildings, Irrigation and Embankments).
6. Agriculture.
7. Excise.
8. Taxation.
9. Fisheries.
10. Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages.
11. Co-operative Societies.
12. Forests.
13. Registration of Deeds and Documents.
14. Religious and Charitable Endowments.
15. Franchise.
16. Arts, Crafts and Local Industries.



# APPENDIX VII

Distribution of Primary Schools on the Basis of  
one Primary School per 3,000 of population :

| District               | No. of Schools | In Urban Areas | In Rural Areas |
|------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1                      | 2              | 3              | 4              |
| Burdwan                | ... 525        | 43             | 482            |
| Birbhum                | ... 316        | 7              | 309            |
| Bankura                | ... 370        | 22             | 348            |
| Midnapore              | ... 933        | 46             | 887            |
| Hooghly                | ... 371        | 68             | 303            |
| Howrah                 | ... 366        | 85             | 281            |
| 24-Parganas            | ... 904        | 179            | 725            |
| Nadia                  | ... 510        | 35             | 475            |
| Murshidabad            | ... 456        | 30             | 426            |
| Jessore                | ... 557        | 7              | 550            |
| Khulna                 | ... 542        | 12             | 530            |
| Rajshahi               | ... 476        | 13             | 453            |
| Dinajpur               | ... 585        | 6              | 579            |
| Jalpaiguri             | ... 327        | 6              | 321            |
| Darjeeling             | ... 106        | 14             | 92             |
| Rangpur                | ... 865        | 22             | 843            |
| Bogra                  | ... 362        | 6              | 356            |
| Pabna                  | ... 482        | 18             | 464            |
| Malda                  | ... 351        | 12             | 339            |
| Dacca                  | ... 1,144      | 57             | 1,087          |
| Mymensingh             | ... 1,710      | 46             | 1,664          |
| Faridpur               | ... 787        | 16             | 771            |
| Bhakharganj            | ... 979        | 22             | 957            |
| Tippara                | ... 1,036      | 25             | 1,011          |
| Noakhali               | ... 568        | 8              | 560            |
| Chittagong             | ... 599        | 20             | 579            |
| Chittagong Hill Tracts | 70             | ...            | 70             |
| Total                  | ... 16,297     | 825            | 16,472         |



## APPENDIX VIII

The Revised curriculum for Primary Schools in the Presidency of Bengal which came into effect from January, 1923.

### Class I

#### Compulsory Subjects

( Work preparatory to formal teaching for the first two months of the 'session' ) :

Reading ( Vernacular ), Writing ( Vernacular ), Arithmetic, Observation Lessons and Hygiene for boys, Hygiene and Domestic Economy for girls, Physical Drill for boys or Needle-Work for girls.

#### Optional Subjects

Manual Work for boys, Drawing for boys and girls.

### Class II

#### Compulsory Subjects

Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Observations Lessons and Hygiene for boys, Hygiene and Domestic Economy for girls, Physical Drill for boys or Needle-work for girls and Geography.

#### Optional Subjects

Manual work for boys, Drawing for boys and girls.

### Class III

#### Compulsory Subjects

Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Geography, History, Observation lessons and Hygiene for boys, Hygiene and Domestic Economy for girls, Physical Drill for boys or Needle-work for girls.

#### Optional Subjects

Manual work for boys, Drawing for boys and girls.

### Class IV

#### Compulsory Subjects

Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Geography, History, Hygiene for boys, Hygiene and Domestic Economy for girls, Physical Drill for boys or Needle-work for girls.



**Optional Subjects**

Nature study based on school gardening (for boys in rural schools), Elementary Science (for boys in urban schools), Manual work for boys, Drawing for boys and girls, English (four hours in periods of one hour).

**Class V****Compulsory Subjects**

Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Geography, History, Hygiene for boys, Hygiene and Domestic Economy for girls, Physical Drill for the boys or Needle-work for girls.

**Optional Subjects**

Nature study based on school gardening (for boys in rural schools), Elementary Science (for boys in urban schools), Manual work for boys, Drawing for boys and girls, English (five hours in periods of one hour) and Zamindari and Mahajani Accounts.

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## INDEX

### A

- Abraham Lincoln—96.
- Act—53, 57, 59, 60.
- Acts—261, 262.
- Act of 1919—83, 84, 97, 101, 147, 161, 223.
- Act of 1930—163, 187, 197, 201,
- Religious Education—209.
- 214, 223.
- Act of 1963—221, 223, 224, 232.
- Act of 1973—218.
- Adam—6, 189, 232.
- Aiyangar—90.
- Alexander—92.
- Amveli—8.
- A. N. Basu—197.
- Azizul Haque—188.

### B

- Baroda—8, 15.
- Bande Mataram—98.
- Bengal Budget—100.
- Bengal Education League—202.
- Bibliography—258.
- Bill—47, 48, 49.
- Biss Scheme—119, 161, 234.
- Books—262, 263.
- Pombay Presidency—47.
- Burdwan Division—135.

### C

- Census—78.
- Chittagong—49.
- Commissioner—52, 53, 68, 70, 246-249.
- C.M.D.A.—219, 220.
- Commission—7.
- Committee—93, 102, 151, 153, 167, 168.
- Comilla—132, 134.

- Coordination—123.
- Compulsory Education—171, 209, 237.
- Constitution—5.
- Corporation—49, 64, 68, 69, 71, 75-78, 80, 81, 145, 219, 241, 242, 244, 245, 246, 249, 250, 252.
- C. R. Das—90.
- Curriculum—229.
- Curzon—8.

### D

- Darjeeling—134, 135.
- Democracy—4.
- Devolution Rules—117.
- District Boards—31, 34, 35-37, 40, 42, 43, 62, 135, 140-142, 145, 163, 206.
- D.P.I.—241.
- District School Boards—177, 184.
- Divisional Commissioner—38, 49.
- Divisional Inspectors—136.
- Dunn—21, 24, 26, 29, 30, 32-39, 65-67, 68, 77, 246.
- Dyarchy—48, 85, 87, 88, 90, 94, 95, 212.

### E

- Education—46, 53, 66, 88, 97.
- Education Commission—217.
- Education Committee—72, 73, 74, 75.
- Education Minister—98.
- E. E. Biss—119-121, 123, 124, 126, 128-132, 137, 139, 141-146, 148, 152, 160.
- Elementary—27, 144, 147.
- Encyclopaedia—1.
- England—46.

## F

- Finance—222.  
 Finance Dept.—116, 117.  
 First World War—212.  
 Fiscal Commission—110.

## G

- Gokhale—10, 11, 45, 62, 239.  
 Governor—86, 87, 88, 91, 92,  
 General Committee—71.  
 107.  
 Guru Training—37, 125, 131.

## H

- Hartog Committee—147, 150, 156,  
 158, 159, 161, 187.  
 Hindu Rajika—61.  
 Hitavadi—137.  
 Hornell—27.

## I

- Imperial Govt.—22, 41, 159, 212,  
 213.  
 Inspection—222, 235.

## J

- John Simon—147.

## K

- Khaja Nazimuddin—167.  
 Kishori Mohan—48.

## L

- Layton Report—159.  
 Local bodies—25, 29.  
 Lord Lytton—62, 63.  
 Lord Meston—101.  
 L.S.S. O'malley—240, 250.

## M

- Magazines—263.  
 Mahatma Gandhi—83, 84.  
 Majority Report—93.

- Mass Education—9.  
 Memorandum of 1935—195.  
 Meston Committee—101, 106,  
 112.  
 Meston Settlement—62, 94, 98,  
 105-113, 117, 182, 189, 212.  
 Minority Report—93.  
 Mont-Ford Report—45, 56, 57,  
 89, 97, 101, 102, 108, 113,  
 160, 236.  
 Montagu-Chelmsford—100.  
 Municipalities—29-31, 36, 39, 42,  
 43, 47, 49, 52-59, 62, 120,  
 128, 134, 140, 141, 142, 206,  
 218.  
 Musharauf Hossain—164, 165.

## N

- National Council—9.  
 National Education—212.  
 National Library—262-264.  
 Newspapers—263.  
 Noakhali—50.

## P

- Panchayati—26, 42, 99, 129,  
 220.  
 Peel Committee—111.  
 Periodicals—263.  
 Popularization—123.  
 Provashi—61.  
 Primary Curriculum—195, 210.  
 Primary Education—1, 2, 3, 8,  
 15, 17, 25, 27, 30, 35, 39, 40,  
 42, 45, 47, 48, 51, 52, 54, 55,  
 56, 58, 59, 60, 66, 79, 81, 97,  
 119, 133, 137, 142, 144, 149,  
 160, 163, 167, 168, 212, 218,  
 234, 237.  
 Provincial—23, 27, 162.

## R

- Rangpur Municipality—137.  
 Reform Act—91.



Reforms Scheme—29, 45, 60, 81,  
83, 95, 97, 104.

Religious Education—209.

Reports—259.

Reserved—85, 89, 90, 91, 116.

Resolution of 1935—201, 204.

Resolution of 1937—198, 208.

Retrenchment Committee—98,  
155.

Round Table Conference—109.

## S

Sanjibani—61.

Secretariat Library—259, 261.

Select Committee—48, 49, 56,  
58, 165, 166.

Sharp—40.

Simon Commission—95.

Sixth Plan—225, 226, 230.

Special Committee—76.

S. N. Roy—45, 47, 48, 51.

Stagnation—151, 152.

Standard Contributions—103.

State Archives—258, 259.

Stanley Despatch—232.

Statistical Abstract—115.

Stuart Mill—4.

Suraj—138.

Surendranath Banerjee—107.

Survey—13.

S. W. Goode—31, 38.

## T

Taxation Enquiry Committee—  
110.

Teachers—28.

Transferred—85, 89, 90, 91,  
116.

## U

Union Boards—129, 131, 133,  
163, 164.

Union Committee—105.

## W

Walter Layton—113.

Ward IX—81.

Wastage—151, 152, 231.

W. C. Wordsworth—65, 67, 136.

West—12, 14, 17, 20, 21, 25, 32,  
41, 43, 44, 127, 152.



372  
PVR

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